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DIRECTED BY
RICHARD WHERRETT
NOVEMBER 11 - DECEMBER 13

SYDNEY
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Theatre Australia

NOVEMBER 1984, VOLUME 5, NO. 4

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Scaps

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2 by arrangement with
the Shopfront Theatre

Errol Bray's the choir

director Neil Armfield,
designer Eamon D'Arcy with
David Atkins, Simon Burke,
Tony Sheldon, David Slingsby

3 The Three Sisters

by Anton Chekhov,
director Aubrey Mellor,
designer Kim Carpenter with
John Bell, Cathy Downes,
Michele Fawdon, Drew
Forsythe, Barry Otto

4 by David Hare,
director Neil Armfield

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ANDREA DODD 1988

COMMENT

The idea that a theatre company is more than a humanitarian for putting on shows has taken an amazingly long time to catch on in this country. Any regular theatregoer knows that even the way actors behave to their set reflects their position in the power structure of a company. The total experience of going to a theatre is determined not only by the individual talents which contribute to a production but also by the personal and political interrelationships between those talents. It shows.

A large part of the success of *Remotely* during the last ten years has been in their identity as a unified company in which all members have some say. More of that next month. This month we have Richard Wherrett discussing the terms of the Sydney Theatre Company, and the problems of building a large company with an identity of its own.

For comparison there is the Australian Performing Group — the only company in Australia to have made a serious attempt to incorporate the collaborative nature of the theatre product into the running of the workplace. The most articulate spokesperson for the A.P.G. industrial ethos is John Remeni, this year at large and running hot around the country spreading the good word.

The A.P.G. has always worked on the principle that the collective statement possible in the theatre is something more, or at any rate other, than the statements individuals can or want to make by themselves. So every worker in the theatre has to be given a share in the responsibility for the usual product. Remeni, posed to work as a hawk, says himself as matter of course of the world in a collective situation.

The process takes time, of course, and an awful lot of the work in meetings which Richard Wherrett refers to in this issue. Over the years the A.P.G. have spent a great deal of time searching for procedures that will allow it to happen, and these meetings are the subjects of a hell of a lot of stories. They have had good success, but no-one can doubt their great contribution to Australian theatre.

Organising a state theatre company

(with obligations to the traditional repertoire, the subscribers and the tourist trade) to allow the communal expression of a group of individuals' ideas is a difficult, and more difficult manner. Apart from anything else there is an inbuilt conservatism which such a company's role seems to engender. So a tiny vote add to suggest that the S.T.C. is taking over the mantle of the A.P.G.'s industrial philosophy. But, on a different scale that is what the S.T.C. is attempting. Well-known expatriate Victorian Graeme Blundell referred in these pages last month's age to their "caring and open government".

The trouble with all these comparisons, so many idealistic Artists' Groups have found, is that they cannot be imposed from the top, and that some people are better at them than others. Everyone is situated in a different way, and there is the danger of replacing the old institutional hierarchy with a new hierarchy of people who speak well at meetings. The great task, and the most important, is to find a way of giving everyone a chance to have their influence in the way that suits them best, rather than the way which suits a set institutional structure.



John McCallum

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I N F O

CHRISTOPHER JONES has been appointed co-ordinator of the second Australian Drama Festival which is to be held in Adelaide in April 1981.

The festival which was last held in December 1979, is one of the main activities of South Australia's Association of Community Theatres. Prior to taking up the position of co-ordinator, Christopher Jones was working for the Arts Council of New South Wales. He was earlier the Administrator of the Riverina Trucking Company in Wagga. He says:

"I see the festival as being two main things, first there is the aim to celebrate achievements in Australian theatre both in the past and present, and we aim to do this by presenting as many productions as possible during the 18 day festival. Then there is the opportunity to get performers, writers, directors and audiences together to discuss both formally and at late night sessions, aspects of Australian theatre. This

sort of interchange can only help to increase our awareness of what Australian theatre is about and which way it might be heading."

The list of the committee for the Australian Drama Festival carries such names as Paul Hies from the State Theatre Company of South Australia, Chris Windauer from the South Australian Department for the Arts, Sue Avery from the Caslow Arts Centre and Max Weaning of the Adelaide College of Arts and Education.

"With this sort of back up, the festival is off to a great start. The assistance I've received since arriving has been tremendous. We've planned to make it a real celebration — 18 days where there will be Australian works and without it being boring!"

For further information The Co-ordinator A.C.T. Association of Community Theatres, Adelaide C.A.N.E., Kenton Ave., Adelaide.

YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS... The 4th National Young Playwright's Weekend, which was held from Thursday 18th of August to Sunday 31st, was a definite success.

Thirty-five young playwrights from Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland, Adelaide and Perth gathered together at the Shopfront Theatre in Carlton Sydney to learn as much about writing as they could in four days.

The weekend was organised by Errol Bory, who managed to get such people as Bob Ellis, Bert Daling, John McGregor, Bryan Brown, Michelle Fawdon, David Atkins, Raffi Ceterill, Les Marinos, Anna Boludo, John Stone, Alex Burn and David Slingby to attend the workshops and help however they could.

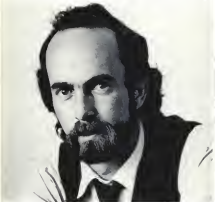
Some of the plays were video-taped or performed on stage by the resident actors at Shopfront.

It was worth every effort that went into organising the weekend, and there should be many more of its kind!

LA BOUTE... La Boute has announced the details of its programme for 80-81.

In a Season described as "a show-stopping season of variety" plays include David Williamson's *Hamlet of Friends*, the Edinburgh Festival Award Winner Errol Flynn's *Great Big Adventure Book for Boys* by Rob George, *The Russian Man* by Mick Barnes, *Colonial Experience* by Walter Cooper, *Occupations* by Trevor Griffiths and as a New Year Bonus *Shrek, Rattle 'N' Roll* or *A Daring Devil's Date* with Devoni by Simon Devoni and Ian Dorracott.

Shrek, Rattle 'N' Roll is the final play in the highly successful musical trilogy by Brisbane writers Simon Devoni and Ian Dorracott. "Catch the number 57 camel train and come for a trip across exotic, blazing sands to high adventure with the ultimate darling here — the Prince of Arabs!" It sounds just the thing for the New Year.



Christopher Jones. Photo: David Wilson.



Fools Gallery at Workshop. Photo: John Wood

FOOLS GALLERY THEATRE...

The Fools Gallery Theatre Company's presentation of the first part of their series *Images from the Background* 'Standard Operating Procedure' opened in Canberra on September 25th. *Images* deals with the way we are conditioned by cultural myths which create and continue the destructive separate roles of men and women. Each piece in the series is individually devised and self-contained though it links in theme to the others through

recurring symbols and images.

Workshopped by the group in an experiential process determined by the specific mythical background and the type of images to be presented, the four parts of the series will open in different cities. 'Standard Operating Procedure' and 'Sleeping Beauty' open in Canberra and together with 'Original Sin' will be performed in the Cleveland Open Space in Sydney in January. 'Being' the fourth of the series will be added in Melbourne in

April-May next year.

The Fools Gallery are reaching out chemically with this venture and their work, based on group creation, should create different performances - living theatre.

The series needs to be seen from the beginning for it is the first of the series that really marks through history the release of man's fear of women, and the myths created to justify men's atrocities against women. 'Rape' says one Vietnam veteran was pretty 'SOP'.

ADELAIDE'S HISTORIC 'WARNER-MAJESTIC'... Major film groups and theatre companies around Australia have joined forces with the Save the Warner-Majestic Theatre Group. Headed by Mark Sobels and Stephen Moulden, they are making an effort to save Adelaide's 124-year-old theatre from demolition by the Commonwealth Banking Corporation who plan to build an 18-storey banking complex on the site. On the eve of demolition the Australian Heritage Commission placed the theatre on their interim list, but it has now been taken off and is at present only saved from demolition by a ban on the building by the Builders and Labourers Union.

The Warner-Majestic has a dress circle of carter-deer design, Victorian Theatre boxes and Victorian gold picture-frame proscenium, a fly tower and splendid acoustics - said one

hundred years ago and repeated twenty years ago, to equal that of any theatre in the southern hemisphere. It holds approximately 800 people.

Numerous Australian theatre companies and film groups have written and said that they would be pleased to use the theatre, were it preserved. So, with management, it need never be dark.

The Warner-Majestic has had a chequered but fascinating history over 124 years.

From 1856-1880 it was White's Assembly Rooms and Concert Hall, then Garner's Theatre (1880-1882), Gainers' Rooms (1884-1892), Ripon Theatre (1893-1900), Tivoli Theatre (1901-1913), Star Theatre (cinema) (1914-1916), Majestic Theatre (1916-1968). It became a theatre restaurant in 1969 (the Celebrity Theatre) before becoming the Warner Theatre in 1969-

THE PROFESSIONAL - AMATEUR LINE becomes increasingly fine and seems to meet in some excellent co-operation especially in documentary programmes.

May we draw Sydneysiders attention to New Theatre's *Wolfe Rough Wolfe Rough* is set at the outbreak of WWI in the Clyde and deals with Wolfe's disenchantment with the political shenanigans of the time.

Victorian readers will be interested in the 1812 Theatre's production of the John Wegg entertainment based on Ned Kelly's hanging - with a gala performance on the 11th (the actual date in 1880 when Kelly was hanged).

And all Newcastle (and NSW) should see RYTC's *The Star Show*. Written by Peter Matheson and John McCallum, it will include the actual film footage taken on 'that' night.

I N F O

AUSTRALIAN AND EUROPEAN THEATRE ... Rick Billingham's report for the Australia Council on his recent trip overseas makes fascinating reading. The report in full is available from the Australia Council, 168 Walker Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060.

Two sections of particular interest are from page 2:

"Of course there is a great paradox waiting to snare the Australian involved in travel study of Euro-American theatre. While there is much talk of our being a multi-cultural society, and we are geographically closer to Asia and the Pacific than to Europe, this is hardly reflected in our theatres.

For almost anyone who has grown up in Australia it is still easier and certainly cheaper to traverse the detailed terrain of Euro-American style performance, script and performers, direction, design, production and rehearsal right here in Australia — from the comfort of a seat at any one of our major subsidised, or indeed alternate, theatres.

We may accept the need to have fringe multi-cultural immigrant community theatre but not the possibility that say, the Indonesians, our own Aborigines or indeed any non-European could offer better ways of seeing ourselves and the world. In so far as there is any debate, via the Australian playwright, it tends to rely very heavily on the second hand Euro-American form, style and experience. (Has anyone noticed that our actors are naturally better at moving than speaking?)

To appreciate fully the sad depth and delight of this irony perhaps it is necessary to crown sixteen years of passionate involvement in the advancement of an *Australian* theatre with a journey of 45,000 kilometres so that one can truly measure the dimension of our unbelievably theatrical achievement — that of an all embracing Euro-American colonial enclave within the rich traditions and fabric of Aboriginal, Asian, Pacific



Rick Billingham

and immigrant cultures.

For, as I was to discover, the clue to the real truth of this paradox lies not only in the yearning for the cultural life of Europe and America, but in the very distance that we find ourselves from those epicentres, that only in making a journey across that gap is it really possible to understand how much we in Australia are like excited astronauts witnessing the living presence of a star's supernova which has long since

disappeared in the firmament — we applaud the echo, but never its substance.

And a paragraph from page 3:

"Theatre in Europe does not necessarily answer our Australian needs because *the important things that go to make up our society and ourselves here, are actually at depth quite different to those of Europe and even America.*"

STEPPING OUT... People who saw and enjoy *Best Day the Ever* (the film that was so popular at the Film Festival), will probably also find *Stepping Out* a film to see.

An extraordinary film, *Stepping Out* is the celebration of a remarkable event. It explores the lives of a unique theatre group of mentally handicapped people, who have lived in an institution since early childhood, as they prepare for their first public performance — at the Sydney Opera House.

It takes us inside their lives, inside their relationships... as they gradually take on responsibilities and discover talents and abilities in themselves which everyone had assumed were beyond them.

Stepping Out a deeply moving statement about the potential of human beings to break through the limitations set for them by others, is sponsored by the Australian Government, the New South Wales State Government and Australian industry, with the Australian Film Commission for 1981 International Year for Disabled Persons.



Chris Dahlen in Stepping Out. Photo: Jane Moss Ltd



Helmut Bakuta and some friends at the St Martin's Young Playwrights' Seminar

ST MARTIN'S — A NEW STYLE FOR THE TEENAGE MARKET...

Under the direction of Helmut Bakuta and his staff, St Martin's Youth Arts Centre in Melbourne continues to develop and market a distinctive style to the teenagers and kids of Melbourne and Victoria.

The new Youth Arts Centre opens in September '81 with four new plays two of which emerged from St Martin's Young Playwrights' Seminar held earlier this year. *Shine of the Service* by Bill Marshall and *The Plan A Prisoner* by Andrew Macpherson.

St Martin's is currently touring its new show, *The Quick Fire Café: Smoke & Control* — A New Wave Australian version of *Lower Depths*.

The show currently being developed for touring is *Who Killed Gloria Marshall?* — a terrorist fantasy dealing with the massive exploitation of young people by marketing campaigns.

Box (A) Box is a musical piece being written and performed by a group of 9 to 14 year olds re-examining traditional sex roles within the family.



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WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



by Norman Rosell

Establishment of a permanent Musical Comedy Company recently re-surfaced as a letter-to-the-editor topic in the Sydney Morning Herald. I do not know if any of the writers were aware of efforts over the past few months to create an Australian Musical Theatre Company similar in structure and operation to the Australian Opera and Australian Ballet.

It is not easy. It was the spiralling costs of musicals that helped to put J.C. Williamson Theatres out of business. As Michael Edgley has said, big musicals are no longer an attractive economic proposition unless you have a blockbuster like *Eva*.

However, responses to shows like *Amos, The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas* and even a small-scale musical like *There's Nothing Out There* proves the audience potential is still there — people not attuned to opera or ballet, but hungry for quality light entertainment such as provided by shows like *Olivia* (already a smash-hit revival in London), *White Horse Inn* (Amers, Victoria) and *Her Majesty, Late June, Music In The Air*. It is old-time winners like these the supporters of the permanent company concept want to put on, not the million-dollar modern musicals.

First positive move in this direction came from actor Noel Ferrier, who launched a one-man campaign with the slogan, "Let's Hear It For The Musical". His plan was for 30/30 funding from government and public sector sponsors to launch a company operating on a repertory policy and staging four or five musicals a year in all capitals.

Ferrier had the moral support of Home Affairs Minister Bob Elliott, but so far has had setbacks in financing his scheme. A long-promised "pilot" production of *White Horse Inn*

has yet to appear. However, last time I spoke to him he told me an announcement would be very soon forthcoming. It may already have emerged by the time you read this.

In another more ambitious move last year, Actors Equity sponsored a public meeting attended by representatives from most theatre companies as well as interested groups and individuals. A committee formed at that gathering and subsequently held many meetings seeking ways to get the project off the ground.

I examined a proposition from one established Sydney theatre, but talks eventually broke down over the question of control. The theatre wanted one man, the committee a board of directors.

Next, the committee explored the setting up of a Musical Theatre Trust, along the lines of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. This came to naught when the Australia Council ruled it would not subsidise either a trust or a single company. What it would do was establish a fund from which it would invest in approved single productions submitted by any commercial company, an operation similar to that of the Australian Film Commission and the various State film corporations. The council would invest up to 25 percent of production costs initially, with a possible further 25 percent towards running costs. It would be reimbursed proportionately from profits, if any.

Some members of the committee thereupon decided to invest in and form such a company in order to qualify for Australia Council funding. Plan is that the company, capitalised at a suggested \$1 million, would be registered on the Stock Exchange, giving opportunity for all who had indicated interest to become investors.

It is envisaged the company would first acquire premises and equipment, then apply to the council for investment in its first and subsequent productions. A longer-range project is a tie-up with the Registered Clubs Association and the staging of specially designed musicals on the club circuit.

Freddie Gibson's idea for a subscription season at the Theatre Royal next year has, I hear, had to be deferred. I believe the plan was for a four-show package, at spaced dates

through the year, which would have included Warren Mitchell in *Death of a Salesman*, U.S. playwright Mark Medoff's successful *Children Of A Lesser God*, about the romance and marriage of a deaf pupil to her "hearing" teacher, and a musical. All three are still likely to be programmed for 1981, but as one-off offerings.

Talking of musicals, whisper is that the Bob Fosse American hit, *Chicago*, could be in the Sydney Theatre Company's 1981 line-up, with Nancye Hayes and Geraldine Turner in the roles created by Chita Rivera and Gwen Verdon.

And talking of the Theatre Royal, this year's most expected showbiz personality must have been manager Pat Bagge, who took off on Oct. 26 for her last overseas visit — seven weeks in Europe and Britain. Five percent business and 95 percent pleasure, she told me.

An esteemed colleague, in his review of a recent late-night show at the Downstairs Nimitz, said it had taken since 1965 for Michael McClure's satirical play, *The Beard*, to reach Sydney. Not so. I saw it at least 10 years ago at what was then a drop-out rendezvous at Kings Cross called the Yellow House. It was staged by Nigel Triffin, Patricia Jones, from the ensemble, played Jean Harlow, but I cannot remember who played Billy the Kid.

The London Sunday Telegraph critic who nominated George Hutchinson's *No Room For Dreamers* as the best play at this year's Edinburgh Festival also called *The Turned Phoxes*, a play by Roger Pringle about D.H. Lawrence and starring Ian McKellen, the festival's "biggest disappointment". Makes you wonder further about the ritual to allow David Allen's *Upside Down At The Bottom Of The Garden* to be performed in Britain.

While producer Hal Prince was in Melbourne recently to put his *Eva* company members through their paces, he saw his alternate in the title role, Mariette Raps, in performance for the first time and expressed himself well satisfied. Though his visit was cut short — an urgent call to Chicago for another production of *Eva* — he saw Robyn Archer in *A Star Is Born* and an alternative production to his own, *Stop Craving, Eva Peron*.

SPOTLIGHT

A SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

by Rex Craighero

Ruth Cracknell, Rex Craighero, Arthur Dignam, Drew Forsythe, John Gaden, Ron Haddrick, Jennifer Hagan, John Howard, Robert Menzies, Kerry Walker and Jim Warren have come together for a period of six months to form *A Shakespeare Company*.

The aim of the company is to study in detail and perform a text or texts of Shakespeare's. The project is being pursued away from the time and money pressures of the two-week rehearsal period which has become the tradition in Australian professional theatre. The company is attempting, first, to come to an understanding of the text(s) in the light of as much of the vast body of Shakespeare research and criticism as can be absorbed in such a relatively short period and, second, to translate that understanding into a simple and direct performance of the text(s), with minimal interpretation and explanation beyond what is essential to convey that understanding.

The project is funded by an Australia Council Limited Life grant with a view to giving leading Australian theatre artists an opportunity to pursue a line of research which will enrich their subsequent contributions to the theatre. The work is on a full-time basis for all concerned and is taking place at the old Darlington School behind the Seymour Centre. The project also has the assistance of Sydney University's Theatre Workshop.

In its general survey of Shakespeare's work the company has limited itself to a consideration of the early plays, the comedies, and the late plays, leaving the histories and the major



INTERMEDIATE REHEARSAL, DREW FORSYTHE REHEARSING

tragedies aside. Work was begun on a neglected early play — *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* — and almost two-thirds of the time spent on text work has been spent on it immediately after the open rehearsal, however, work was begun on *Measure for Measure*. It was felt that the detailed study of such aspects as verse structure, staging intentions and the mechanics of Shakespeare's approach to what we now think of as 'characterisation', undertaken in relation to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, would enable the company to move more quickly with *Measure for Measure*. Thus the company is currently continuing work on *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and, at the same time, rehearsing *Measure for Measure* in a period not much longer than that allowed for a commercial production. Public performances of both plays will be given in the Event Theatre at the Seymour Centre during November to mark the conclusion of the project.

Apart from the study of Shakespeare and the texts, the company has devoted some time to examination of its own infra-structure and working principles. The project has been a test of the ability of all concerned — actors, director, research assistant —

to accept the disciplines and responsibilities of research undertaken for individual as well as collective development and conducted without the conventional role hierarchy of the rehearsal process.

And running parallel to the determination to avoid imposed interpretation at the directorial level has been an awareness of the need to avoid imposed characterisation at the acting level. Perhaps the most interesting insight arising from the company's study of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* has been into the way 'character' is built up by addition and modification from scene to scene throughout the play, rather than being fully stated at the outset.

Allied to this insight has been the practical realisation that the age, sex and physical type of the actor are in no way related to the creation of a Shakespearean character. Most of the company have prepared at least three roles in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and at least three different castings of the play will be presented in the November season. These castings include, for example, Jennifer Hagan as Valentine, Ron Haddrick as Julia, Kerry Walker as Proteus, and John Gaden as Sylvia. There can hardly be a more vivid demonstration of the ability of the text to create the character. *Measure for Measure*, on the other hand, has been cast much nearer to conventional 'type' and only one casting is being rehearsed, owing to the comparatively short time being spent on this play.

The minimal setting and costuming devised by the company for the presentation of the plays also reflects its intention to present nothing that is not directly demanded by the texts themselves.

TED CRAIG

by Cathy Peake

Ted Craig's success as a freelance director — by October 8 he will have productions running simultaneously in New York, the U.K. and Melbourne

has left him supposedly sensitive about being based in London, and occasionally worried that his growing reputation overseas could antagonise people here. "I would hate to be seen as someone who just flies in and picks the teeth out of theatre in this country" he says. "I don't. And at the moment, I just feel that my base has to be somewhere else."

Born in Melbourne, he worked first in television at GTV9 and later at ADS7, Adelaide. He was a director by the time he was 26, and has been freelancing both here and overseas since 1975.

Well known for his productions as Director in charge of the programme for the Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House during 1978-79 where the repertoire was mainly classical, and for his earlier work at the Old Tote, one of his few regrets is his very slight working acquaintance with Australian plays.

"They were never channelled to me — I suppose I must have looked at though my area was the classics, and particularly the classical comedies. But what I really like best is a close working association with the author — actually getting a play on which exposes the best of the writing, and in a constructive process of cooperation between writer, actor, and director. It's something I wish I could do more often."

Despite all this, he remains enthusiastic about Australian writing. "Once we were always apologising for it. Surely the best thing now is that Australian work gets presented on an equal footing with overseas work. It's almost as if you have to argue for the overseas piece being as good as the



Australian product. There is a feeling now that if something is special enough to bring from London or Broadway, then it has to be very good indeed."

Talking to him at the M.T.C. where he is currently directing *The Elephant Man* for Russell Street, there can be no doubt that he feels Richard Pomegran's play falls into the latter category.

"*The Elephant Man* is a dramatic fragment of the life of John Merrick — a cripple afflicted with neurofibroma who 'went on' to become the most famous professional freak of the nineteenth century. It is set in the 1880's."

Ted Craig says that one of the most interesting things about the play is that 'some of its most theatrical moments are actually true'.

"As one scene Merrick was being exhibited in a converted grocer's shop which happened to be opposite the London Hospital in the Whitechapel Road. Dr Frederick Treves was passing by and couldn't believe his eyes. He paid the sideshow operator, took Merrick over to the hospital and treated on him."

"Once he was there, and this is really what the play is about, Treves found Merrick to be possessed of a marvellous naive intelligence and, perhaps, most remarkably of all, no trace of bitterness or anger about the cruel exploitation to which he had been subjected."

Research for the play led Ted Craig to the copious literature about Merrick and to the London hospital where his skeleton is still preserved, as are the hat and mask which he was obliged to wear in public.

In his script, Pomegran has Treves say to the sideshow operator "If he's all paper mache and paint, I'm not interested." The playwright himself has taken an identical line and in his script he stipulated that the way not to do the play is with paper mache and paint.

"The way to do it most effectively is to use an almost elemental theatre technique of having a good-looking, totally normal actor play the Merrick role. The more ordinary the actor — the more effective the piece is theatrically."

He agrees that to some extent this interpretation of the main character is similar to the one used by Steve Barlow in his adaptation of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and claims its advantage is that "the audience is made to work in a way that they love working. They must use their imagination right through the play", he adds, "though at one stage they are confronted with the full horror of Merrick's appearance."

"During Treves's lecture, slides of the real Merrick — prepared from original material from the London Hospital — are shown. And as they progress, Robert van Marckenberg distorts himself slightly as if to mimic the physical outline and posture of Merrick."

After *The Elephant Man* has opened, Ted Craig will return to London, and then go on to New York where a film, directed by Lindsay Anderson, is being made of his Old Broadway production of *Look Back in Anger* starring Malcolm McDowell.

Early next year he will be directing Golden's *A Service of Two Masters* at a small festival of classical theatre in Southampton. "It's not in London, and it won't earn me much money, but I can't wait to do it because it's Commedia dell'Arte, it's theatrical, and it's stylish."

A tour in England of a play yet to be decided, and another production in New York are also in the offing. "I think, finally, as a freelance director, what one is always doing is going after the theatre that really interests you," he said.

"Piaf is my Idol"

by Pamela Ruskin

Even when she was a small girl, she dreamed of being a revolutionary heroine. Probably she still does. She's a romantic all right, is Jeanne Lewis. She thinks that Piaf was a romantic too because she dreamed great dreams and made them come true. The dreams turned sour but that's the fate of many romantics of that a, in fact, what Piaf was, which is open to debate.

Jeanne is Piaf — the great, the incomparable Edith Piaf, the Little Sparrow who climbed out of the gutter to glitter among the stars but had that 'nostalgie de la boue' which ensured that she never lost touch with the gutter and gave her a vocabulary rough enough to make a Marcellin fisherman blush. Jeanne has been playing Piaf in *Porn Gents* play that started small in London and on Broadway and, like Topay, 'just grewed' so that it moved in to the big theatres as a hit.

Jeanne isn't easily scared. She's pretty tough in lots of ways but she was scared to death of tackling Piaf, so much so that she had to be almost literally pushed to audition for the role by her friends. Because it meant the first straight acting role, working with other actors. Before that she'd only sung at concerts, either alone or with groups. No? That was a worry but not the real one. "Piaf had always been my idol. To step into her skin — to try to BE that extraordinary woman with a voice that is known and loved by millions — that really scared me."

"I've always felt a special affinity with her — because she was an underdog because she literally grew up in the streets of Paris, poorer than the poor and I've been fighting for the underdog all my life." "Piaf," I suggest. "Didn't care a damn about the underdog. She was totally self-absorbed, as egotistic as are almost all great artists." That's true, but she had strength and she had guts and she not only became great herself, she helped other people like Yves Montand and Charles Aznavour on the path of success."

Who then is this revolutionary-

marque called Jeanne Lewis? Is she beautiful? By no means. But she has something even apart from a remarkable voice that spans three octaves.

With a voice that is well-tuned to Piaf because "I can only sing songs in which I feel involved — music that is honest and Piaf sang songs like that, songs that were the very essence of her age." "Songs, in fact, that used to and still do tear the heart out of you."



Jeanne Lewis

Jeanne is dark, with brown eyes and brown hair that she sometimes wears in a single plait. She was known only to a comparatively few people before she became Piaf. "I've always sung, at least since I was three. My father was the great influence in my life. He was a Jewish trade union leader. My mother isn't Jewish so neither am I but I think that strain has given me my temperament and my emotional make-up."

In 1947, Jeanne went to Cuba, the only Australian among fifty singers, chosen from all over the world. "I was very impressed with what I saw. Their artists are paid a weekly wage. They have security but they don't earn huge salaries like some of the pop singers and film stars do and the difference between the highest paid and the rest is not very great. I like that. I fell in love

with Cuba. I also fell in love twice in five weeks. It was my first trip outside Australia and it was wonderful."

The romantic revolutionary heroine came home. She wasn't interested in commercial success but in making her own kind of music. She sang to audiences of young people, gave many concerts to students with groups. She sang to the militia, to the unemployed, to people who were her kind of people.

Then in 1953, Jeanne realized one of her childhood dreams that had stayed with her all through the years. She was given a travel grant to study experimental voice. She spent seven months on the West Coast of America, five months in Europe and a year in Latin America. "Most of that year was spent in Mexico City."

"I felt I had come home. I speak Spanish and French. I had majored in French which has been a great help for Piaf. In Mexico, I was supremely happy. I will go back there one day. I learned a lot about music and a lot about people."

Playing, singing, living Piaf has been a tremendous experience for Jeanne and she says she couldn't have done it without the help and encouragement of the rest of the cast and producer Murray Close. Only about 50% of the songs have been sung in French. "We followed the English production in that when Piaf talks or when she sings in English, she uses a cockney accent."

One can't imagine Piaf as Or.

"*Porn Gents* has made Piaf a working-class heroine." "Which she wasn't," I say. "Which she wasn't," agrees Jeanne, "But the play has captured her character." "It certainly is earthy. Some of the language is so raw that it shocked Jeanne herself at first." "I couldn't believe I could use it but it was the kind of language that Piaf used and it was right for her and I soon overcame the shock but it did offend sections of the audience whenever it played."

It isn't going to be easy for Jeanne to find a role that will compare with Piaf but then the Little Sparrow with the big voice is a very hard act to follow — as many French chanteuses have learned.

by Catty Peake

Jack Hibberd's new play *A Man of Many Parts* "a night in the life of a god forsaken actor", opens on October 29 at the Universal Theatre. A dramatic monologue or monodrama, it will be directed by Rick Billingham and will star Frederick Paskow as Noah Hope.

The play premiered at the Perth Festival earlier this year and plans to tour it to Canberra next March, and later to Sydney and Brisbane are already under way.

In terms of his other work, Hibberd says *A Man of Many Parts* is the most extreme and daring piece of theatre he has written, particularly as a formal sense "It's totally without narrative content and conventional scene structure. Its structural principle is that of association. Things connect associatively."

It is also, like Noah's 'poet', full of comic impediments, and its strength lies within its intricate, teasing and often widdly comic world of self-reference.

Hibberd himself calls it 'a mental aim' and 'a theatricalized slice of the brain' and it is certainly theatre which like conceptual art frames its own propositions and is then explained in relation to itself.

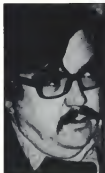
At the very end of the script, Noah Hope recovers from a mental crack-up in an aggressive and assertive frame of mind to proclaim: 'I am my own invention. A conundrum dam-urn'.

Well, he is and he isn't. He is certainly a composite character and if it's hard to pin down his real context and decide whether he is a theatre giving a comic performance, is totally unchanged, is in a pub on tour, or just surviving in unpalatable digs, it is partly because Noah is also a vehicle through which the playwright is advancing some wide-ranging propositions about the state of Western culture.

Unlike his earlier monodrama *Stroke of the Imagination*, which is full of quotation detail, and where Hibberd says he was trying to create a 'distillation of Australia through the composite character of Monk', *A M O M P* is concerned more in terms of a theatrical entry into the

A MAN OF MANY PARTS

'a night in the life of a god forsaken actor' Hibberd's new monodrama.



complexities of mind or consciousness.'

"At the same time, Noah is in search of a coherent and authentic self which he can't find. I believe there is no such thing as an Australian identity. His quest therefore, is intended to be an image for the strong, underlying stress, the lack of cohesion and the cultural despair that is abroad in this country.

We are a highly secular society, and it is very difficult to find a secure, deep-rooted cultural location here."

Hibberd sees that state of affairs as one of the chief reasons why many Australian writers turn to the dramatic monologue, or monodrama as he prefers to call it, and to characters who 'can fabricate a culture', who 'own' a certain kind of history.

"Our culture is very derivative. Noah Hope wants to be an Ibsen with Beckett, Sartre, Flaubert. He wants to be culturally enfranchised with the important figures of our century. He needs to copy them up as an aspect of that twentieth century phenomenon known as the drunken mind. It also helps me underline the fact that everything in the play is in the form of theatrical shards, and of shards of the ego."

Hibberd started writing the play three and a half years ago, and says its evolution has been the longest of any he has written. "It was also the most difficult. It started with the idea of a highly isolated character who, right from the start, was an actor. In the first draft he was called Sherfron von Pusch.

"With later drafts, the canvas expanded, the play took on a more apocalyptic tone and Sherfron became Noah who is, perhaps, the last actor in the world, and the last human being.

"Noah survives through performance: he is a manic depressive who picks himself up off the floor by getting into another act. His world is essentially comic. It has to work primarily at a comic level, but it is also intended to be disturbing."

In order to focus the audience's attention onto the graver side of the play, the script uses music from Liszt (Benediction de Dieu dans la Solitude), Schubert and Purcell. "I chose the Liszt to ironically bracket and frame the play because it has an intensely serene and transcendental quality. Where Noah is manic, wild, delirious and fractured, the music is exactly the opposite. And it also reinforces the sense of Noah's quest or journey.

"Noah is a kind of mad lion through which a lot of theatre history and intellectual life is focused and deflated," says Hibberd, and it will be fascinating to see just how Billingham and Paskow bring him to life.

A Busy Year Of Touring

by Janine Kyle

Glimming around the foyer of Melbourne's Princess Theatre during the Sydney Dance Company's last week of performances in the Melbourne Debut Season, I was reminded of the wonderful cross section of the public that the Company seems to attract these days. The mixture of age groups is immediately striking and it is refreshing to observe the large numbers, apparently coming to dance performances for the first time, mingling with the familiar enthusiasts.

It also struck me that 1980 was quickly drawing to a close. I could vividly recall when our touring plans for the year were just dates on a schedule and the demands of such a tour on dancers and staff were still under contemplation. Since the first major season in 1977, under the Company's newly appointed Artistic Director Graeme Murphy, our interstate touring schedule has grown more ambitious each year. During 1980 the Sydney Dance Company has been as far north as Cairns and as far south as Hobart. Our first tour to North Queensland took place in April with a week each in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton. We presented two programmes including Graeme Murphy's trilogy *Romance* and shorter works such as *Dialogues* and *Sherbrooke*. This tour was followed by an eight week season in the Sydney Opera House which became our most successful Sydney season to date. Also the most ambitious, with a cast of eighteen giving fifty-two performances of three separate programmes with little or no scope for understudies in the event of injury or illness.

One week before the end of this season dancer Carl Morrow developed glandular fever and had to be quickly replaced in his role of Daphnis in Graeme Murphy's newest work *Daph-*

nus and Chloe, by Murphy himself. It was not until late in the Melbourne season in Mid-August that Carl was able to begin working again, starting with less strenuous roles and gradually building stamina.

It is impossible, of course, for an audience to realise that the performers they have just witnessed may have featured a cast of dangers nursing either injuries or colds. These problems occur in any Company but become matters of great concern for a small group such as the Sydney Dance Company.

On July 28 the Company travelled to Canberra for a week only of the



GRAEME MURPHY. PHOTO: DAVID SMITH

Romantic Triple Bill *Sherbrooke*, *Firdaus* and *Daphnis and Chloe*. It is always a pleasure to return to Canberra each year around this time. We have watched our audiences grow to a record level in 1980 which has left us eager to plan our 1981 visit to the Australian capital. It is satisfying to witness enthusiastic following develop after regular visits to interstate capitals and this was indeed a major factor in the Company's decision to include Melbourne in its touring plans for the first time. We enjoyed our performances at the Princess Theatre enormously, giving our now familiar three programme formula in order so precise as wide and as varied a repertoire as possible in our first introduction to the people of Melbourne. Graeme Murphy's first full

length work, *Poppo*, based on the choreographer's impressions of poet Jean Cocteau, was recommissioned especially for the Melbourne Debut season. In addition, we included each of the shorter works given at the Sydney Opera House earlier this year. We were delighted with the warm appreciation of the Melbourne audiences and look forward to returning in 1981.

We arrived in Hobart on September 15th for our third annual season at the Theatre Royal followed by performances in Launceston's Princess Theatre the following week. This year our repertoire for Tasmania included *Amicus*, *Dialogues*, *Firdaus* and *Sherbrooke*. All of the Company was looking forward to the warmer weather we would enjoy during the Brisbane season that was to follow. Many of the dancers and staff had been the victims of a flu virus during the Melbourne season and we had, of course, been working in cold conditions since May. In addition, dancer Bill Fergally had injured his foot on the second night of *Poppo* in Melbourne. The injury occurred during class and Ross Philip had to quickly step into the role of Raymond Radigast at very short notice. This meant too, that Bill Fergally was not with us on the Tasmanian tour, leaving us short of male dancers. Nevertheless, we enjoyed Hobart and Launceston again in 1980 as much as we had in previous years. The audiences, the countryside and sight-seeing were again delightful and the Company benefited from our most successful season in Tasmania to date.

The Sydney Dance Company will complete its Australian touring commitments in Brisbane from October 1-4, performing at the S.G.F.O. Theatre with *Sherbrooke*, *Firdaus* and *Daphnis and Chloe*. In early November the Company will embark on its first overseas tour with engagements throughout Italy. The tour will take us to at least eight cities including Rome ending on December 8th. Both dancers and staff agree that this is an exciting way to end a busy year. Many will take the opportunity to holiday in Europe before returning to Australia to commence work on January 30th, 1981, in preparation for seasons in Australia and a tour to the United States in April-May.

A NIGHT AT THE CABARET CAN BE...

by Ralph Kerle, Graduate Drama Faculty, Victorian College of the Arts; Proprietor, Flying Trapeze Cafe

A night at the cabaret can be spontaneous, emotionally uplifting, physically brutal and just plain fun or at its worst it can be self-indulgent, embarrassing, amateurish and very dull.

What makes a good night of cabaret?

There are numerous elements that cannot be easily defined because the audience is an integral part of a successful evening as opposed to traditional theatre where the audience simply comes along to watch and the combination of booze and food and an audience of non-theatre goers with little respect for theatre conventions can prove electric or lethal and the outcome is that the cabaret performer is much more vulnerable.

At Cabaret Conspiracy, before a predominantly female and gay audience, a born-again Christian on stage attempting to deliver a message was given about 90 seconds before the crowd realised what she was attempting to do and called for the MC to remove her.

In another more serious incident at the Flying Trapeze Cafe in Melbourne, dancer Bob Thorncroft was abused by a rowdy police clerk patron during a nude scene. The manager intervened and had his nose broken!

But more positively when comic Rod Quantock was two minutes into a 40-minute stand-up routine, he was thrown a one-line interruption by a middle-aged Edna (average housewife) and the whole show developed into a battle between the dowager and Quantock.

They traded line after line - the audience cheered for 10 minutes and Quantock walked off - defeated.

Cabaret in its first hour.

Traditional theatre cannot talk of these experiences, though experimental theatre attempted to capture some of these dynamics by artificially setting up the conventions for these things to happen.

"Let's write an audience participation bit in here."



DAVID ARGIE AT THE FLYING TRAPEZE PROTHEATRE CAFE

Discounting the audience variable for a moment, let's try to define what makes a cabaret performer successful.

Cabaret has covered everything from modern dance through to juggling, but its mainstays are comedy and song and there is a whole new generation of Australian comics emerging from the cabaret scene.

If their names are not household words like Hogan, Humphries and Gerson, they are certainly extremely popular cult figures to the followers of cabaret.

Rod Quantock is a true stand-up comic. He struts on stage with his hands in his pockets looking like a rag-bag late '80s hippie. There's the inevitable Hawaiian shirt, blouse covered with badges, white straw hat, patched jeans and sneakers.

He opens by testing the metal of his audience - teasing or insulting them to join in.

He's famous for his one liners to the aggrieved or the reticent. "The remedial group" as he terms them.

"I'm sorry I had the feeling I woke you. I suppose you'll be wanting your nice hables now."

He is an exponent of the Commedia del arte style - setting off on a seemingly simple comedy monologue and apparently letting the audience throw him off course through their continual interruptions.

His brilliance lies in his ability to pull in the threads at the end, tying his performance in a neat package.

Quantock does not use a character - he is a performer.

David Argie is a free-form comic, but he has a number of stock characters - his favourite "Dependent Ruffledge" wears inch-thick bifocals which render him almost blind.

Argie has a spare stock of one liners. "There's a thing in my heart" - the rest of his performance is totally improvised.

Because he is unable to see he listens acutely. A cough in the audience may result in an unmistakable rave about the state of the health of the nation or his doctor joke.

"I went to the doctor and he told me I had three minutes to live."

"He asked if there was anything he could do for me."

"Er... um... you could hold my an egg."

He deliberately sets up chaos on stage and then thrives on it. Sometimes instructs his theatre technicians to play the wrong sound-effects tapes and then chastises them for 10 minutes, then just as the audience is questioning its sanity, Argie throws off his glasses, breaks into a 40-volume grin and mimes Peter Allen's *I Go To Rio*.

He uses his movement skills as an

rehearsing champion and those cucumbers as castmates.

Other solo comedians who work in cabaret are Alan Pownall, Tim South, Simon Hill, Steve Blackburn, Geoff Brooks and Tony Richards.

All these comics present their own original material and work on a very high level of involvement with their audiences. And they all manage to come up with the goods under adverse conditions.

Regrettably there are no women comics in cabaret. Perhaps it is because women must face a whole set of prejudices which makes voices much harder.

Being a solo cabaret comic is not easy.

At least comedy does have each other to cling to when things get rough.

Sodreysalers, Cecil Kelloe and Lance Currie perform a series of short,

Kramer and Neil Gladwin perform what can only be described as a ritual humiliation of their audience. With a drum, cymbals and wailing piano accordion they murder everything from the Broadway hit *Maniacs* to The Troggs' *Rainy Day*.

After Los Tros country and western and punk will never be the same!

They meet dog designer poems, tell ghastly baby jokes and crush the short, fat and infirm unfortunate to be sitting close by.

Los Tros play with others.

They say they want to bring out the untapped, repressed part of the audience's nature. Given that freedom the audience is able to respond the way they probably never have in a theatre before.

Other two-handed cabaret acts are Sydney's singing Lithuanians Brothers Gun and Vince, two sleazy inn-massage and funeral parlour operators, and Rob McElroy and Doug Tomlin, whose skills extend to tap dancing, magic, music and comedy.

Australian cabaret has definitely evolved from being rough and raw into something more professional. Now many of the performers are studying or have studied drama at a tertiary level, but that in no way makes them any more valuable to the scene than those who walk it off the street. For

when the rough and raw meet the slick professionally, then a synthesis occurs that is very special.

Because of its commercial success cabaret is now able to offer a viable alternative to those who, for whatever reasons, want to work outside traditional theatre.

Over the past three years cabaret audiences have also changed from being predominantly students, gays and freaks into a much broader cross-section of the general public.

Cabaret in Australia, denied mainstream outlets like big theatres and regular television appearances has something of an underground mentality. Believing it has something unique to offer cabaret hostlers begin to show off in talent if it is a public offering of profitable events, going it alone without any form of Government subsidy. And through these events the media has recognised that a new, viable movement is afoot. The proof that the public agrees is seen in the drawing power of recent festivals. Sydney's first Cabaret Festival drew about 1,000 people over ten nights and at Melbourne University's "Flamencoverts" — a one off event 1,000 people turned out.

The audiences defied categorisation: the only thing they had in common was that they enjoyed themselves.

The continued recognition of the



THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN CABARET FESTIVAL

a weekend at Garibaldi
by Ralph Kerle

In August Australia saw its first ever cabaret festival. The event was organised by Johnny Allen, an original member of Cabaret Company, and drew about 1,000 people over its ten day season and featured acts from Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney.

The venue was Garibaldi's, a small bunker over the top of a panel beater's shop in Darlinghurst. Garibaldi's, a comedy centre, has been Cabaret Company's home for almost two years.

I was there for only a couple of nights, the Friday and Saturday of the last weekend, and during that time experienced some amazing highs and lows, since the calibre of the acts ranged from pathetic to brilliant.

Without doubt one of the highlights of the two nights was Boom Boom Le Bern's performance late Friday night. She sang "The Hotel Song" from Brecht's "Happy Ends". It was a truly stunning performance that had Brechtians fans enthusing that it was one of the finest performances they had ever seen. It chastised those followers of Boom Boom used to a much more comic and cynical approach from this bigger-than-life lady. I have seen times when she has reduced a room to shocked silence or laughter with one of her witty comments, but this time the room was in awe with the sheer power and tragedy of her performance.

There was some fine magic from an

sharp sketches well suited to radio or television. They are famous for their "De Pook" series on 2JJJ FM radio. During their show you will meet a monistic French film director, a manic Scottish adviser on nuclear war, Norwegian cricket hat makers and lesbian Orme bushmen.

They make use of the traditional theatre skills of highly developed characterisation and a remarkable facility with language. What puts them outside mass appeal is the all-know content of their performance.

Los Tros Ringbarbar, by their own admission, are a total disaster act. These two shell-shocked artists, Steve

THE MAKING OF A COMPANY

B Y R I C H A R D W H E R R E T T

Five years working in England (1965-1970) left me, ten years later, with three particular sources of inspiration for the beginnings of the Sydney Theatre Company. I hoped for theatrical events which would manifest the spontaneity and risk of Joan Littlewood from Stratford East's Theatre Royal, the theatrical flair of John Dexter from the National Theatre, and the intellectual discipline of Bill Gaskill from the Royal Court.

Other basic aims should perhaps be elaborated on here:

I feel we must achieve a basic standard of production that is interesting, honest, competent, economical, sensible, and identifiable. Sometimes as well we might also be inspiring, brilliant, revolutionary, extraordinary and unforgettable.

We aim for great acting. Acting that requires passion, sensitivity, imagination, judgement, honesty, generosity, spontaneity, discipline, activity (not passivity), energy (not laziness) and self awareness (not self-consciousness).

In other words, above all else the quality of the product matters.

A COMPANY

Theatre is a collaborative effort — the group paramount. The ego of the artists involved must be made a positive force by the mutual understanding that the individual is better off when the group is better off. It is tempting to romanticise with examples from the great theatrical companies of the world — the Berliner Ensemble or the Royal Shakespeare Company for example. Certainly we can take inspiration from these, and most of all in the need for an acting company. The word "company" has three points of reference for us:



- (a) the company members incorporated in the legal sense who have the right to vote for representation on the Board of Directors,
- (b) the permanent staff and
- (c) the actors.

I feel it is essential that of the third group, a certain number be contracted to the company on a permanent basis. Without such a group, I question, as regards a theatre company, the validity of the term. Certainly Sydney has not experienced such a company for some years. Such a group of actors provides continuity, a point of reference, a core of compositing, a lead in risk taking, and a guiding hand to all other actors joining the company on a one-off basis. These conditions must prevail for the possibility of great acting to arise. I like the concept of a theatre season, the rhythm of it, and the sense of occasion which ensues. This is very often devised on an annual basis so that it seems fair enough to coin the euphemism "permanent" to describe an actor employed for a twelve-month contract.

So far our slogan is a measured one. I think it is very difficult. The company should play the leads, but leading actors are reluctant to commit themselves for long periods of time. With only, at this stage, six productions a year in one venue it is difficult to find the actors with the range that allows them to find a role in the range of plays offered. I think we have a particular problem in this country of preparing our younger actors for leading roles. A Hamlet or a Hedda Gabler takes years of preparation before the technical demands of such roles are realised. It is too easy for our actors to be seduced by the quicker and richer gains of film and television.

We are a complacent country.

Nothing can be created in a state of tension. So it is essential that the company as a whole, hardworking, pressured, and committed, be relaxed, convivial and open. This is so in particular as regards relations between the various departments within the company — administrative, technical and acting. This depends on how the company is governed.

GOVERNMENT

The term "Director" as regards the company also has a number of senses — there exists the Director of the company as well as those directors of the company who exist on the Board. The position of Director of the Sydney Theatre Company, as defined by the original advertisement for the position and my contract, functions as a chief executive of the company (and thus the term was preferred to that of Artistic Director). Given the responsibility of this position to the Board, it was quite clearly spelt out from the start that the chief executive held the ultimate responsibility within the company, reflected most of all in the

power to hire and fire all other positions. How this works in practice of course depends on the individual. Given that theatre is a collaborative effort it follows that I believe that the ultimate responsibility be exercised only after consultation with all departments, and the unequivocal delegation of responsibilities to the heads of all the departments. It is at this moment (September, 1980) much more stimulating and encouraging to be devising the 1981 programme with a group of people who make up the executive of the company than it was a year ago when there were just two of us. This group of people: Director, the General Manager, the Production Manager, the Associate Director, Productions Assistant, the Promotions Officer and a representative from the acting company meet automatically every Thursday morning at 9:40am. The meeting formally, with the assistance of a secretary, minutes, an agenda etc, discusses and resolves issues which have been in some form or another in process all week. In turn the company as a whole meets every fortnight to discuss company matters, impart information in a two-way dialogue, hear suggestions, make demands, etc. It is true that I am fond of meetings. Our organisation abounds with them. Apart from these two, we have production meetings weekly, a post-mortem on each production, a meeting for the marketing of each show, and so on. But the word is only the formal one which describes the means by which we talk together. It is out of the free and challenging discussion that the best ideas arise. In this way we may achieve surprise in our ventures. And surprise, the not knowing of what is going to happen next, as in life, is the essence of theatre.

The Board: The final factor in the government of the company is of course the Board. The long process by which the full Board takes over from the Interim Board was completed on September 23 when the new Board met for the first time. It has been a long process for the simple reason that it required the re-writing of the Articles of Association which were done originally in great haste to give the company an immediate legal existence. Given the history of Boards in arts organisations in this country, it

was with great care and thought that the new Articles were drawn up in an attempt to foresee every circumstance was accounted for.

THE FUTURE

Are we to be a writers theatre, an actors theatre, a directors theatre, an avant-garde or a classical theatre? Clearly we have cause to do what no other company in Sydney is doing. Yet I believe we must be all of these. In terms of subsidy we are the largest

"Theatre is perpetually frustrating — the phenomenal experience that any art can give, of momentarily feeling that existence is violently exciting and beautiful and worthwhile, is very rare in theatre, because so many chance and haphazard factors are involved. But when they work, it's an experience of a far greater intensity than any other art."

Kenneth Tynan

company in the State, we are regarded as a "State Theatre Company", we play in a venue which provides a singular focus on our activities, and the demands of that venue mean that the scale of our work must sometimes be bigger than the other companies. So it seems to me that we must provide the focal point for theatrical activity in this State. The real history by which I mean history set to be made: The development of a house style, the devising of a unique programme of work, the creation of a distinctive company entity will take more than one season of plays. This has nothing to do with being "better" or "worse" than our fellows. Quality being assumed, I believe we must strike a balance in our programming and in our presentation, providing other companies with the means to be extreme, specialist, peculiar, unique. Our uniqueness must lie elsewhere, while we provide a balanced centre around which and in relation to which other companies can be real alternatives.

At the risk of exclusivity in various

departments, I think it essential in order to achieve singularity of direction and uniqueness of style in our work, that certain positions in the company be contracted permanently. I mean the positions of Associate Director(s), Resident Designer, Literary Advisor, Lighting Designer, as soon as possible guests in these departments should be the exception not the rule.

And it is not enough just to arrive at a hopefully chosen season of plays which is balanced in both its variety of content and in its meeting the budget. There must be more meaning to the choice, an overall concept or aim, either in form or content, which links each play into an integrated whole. This is our next step in programming. **The Wharf:** We have been looking for a venue in which to mount secondary activities. From the outset I have estimated my belief in the essential inclusion of such activities in order to complement and contrast main house activities. Meanwhile we are also in search of a home — that is a permanent base for our administration, workshop, and wardrobe departments, which ideally will include an rehearsal space. It has been rumoured for some time that we are negotiating for a wharf in the Rocks area. The rumours are true, and we have every hope that with the assistance of the Premier's Department through the New South Wales Government Division of Cultural Activities and the Department of Public Works, with the help of the Maritime Services Board, that such a wharf is being made available to us for conversion into a home with a small theatre space included. I include this purely because in the first year of our existence the process towards obtaining premises and the detailed work as regards plans and budgets for it have taken a huge amount of time. I have no doubt that the company we will be in the future will be directly linked to the gaining of these premises. While we are happy in the Opera Theatre, and I believe have gone a long way towards improving its reputation, nonetheless the fact is that we rent the building and cannot expect to do what I what we would want if it were our own home. The wharf and everything about it has the means to reflect exactly what the company is in physical terms.

INTERVIEW

Concerning various viewpoints

by Irving Wardle

I can't say that reviewing plays has been much help to my social life but there have been one or two bonuses, and whenever I wish to give my ego a little treat I have only to remind myself that it was I who first introduced Alan Ayckbourn to Ben Travers. The summer meeting between Britain's two greatest living comic writers took place three years ago in a Victoria restaurant. Ayckbourn then in his late 30s, Ben pushing 92 and rather proved about the delayed production of his new play, *After You with the Milk*. They got on like a house on fire, and afterwards Ayckbourn wrote to say that he'd been thinking his career was half over — but now he realised it was just beginning.

Evidence that this was no idle courtesy to a senior colleague is contained in Ayckbourn's latest West End show, *Taking Steps* (Lyric). Not only is it dedicated to Ben Travers but to a large extent it is a Travers play. Sir, his Third, is a crumbling and supposedly haunted mansion, featuring (like *Mosby*) an overbearing jealous fifty-year husband, and (like *Chicken in the Hat*) a garrulous romantic lead, in very little action the common comic viewpoint of the two writers their mockery of hollowness, and particularly of those who apply strong-arm tactics to personal relationships.

This being an Ayckbourn piece, the tale also has another meaning, built into Alan Fagg's set which squashes a three-storey house elevation to floor level so that the cast are continually flaring up and down invisible stairways or practising bedroom exercises in the midst of a living room conference.

The house in question belongs to Roland, an alcoholic and three-devised hardware tycoon, determined that his fourth wife will not get away from him as a "frigid self-commercial go-go dancer with a girl account in Sweden." She sees herself as a frustrated artist, and is taking steps to regain her freedom after three sleepless months on the orthopaedic bed.

Her brother Mark is another managing male, regarding custody of his infant girlfriend after an alleged charge of seducing *Aliso* in continuous attendance as Roland's landlord who will make any steps to sell his the property, short of starting the day as black velvet.

These three are bound together by an interlocking pattern of self-interest, and they are placed in an ingenuitous contrast with the girl friend, and with an unarticulate young conveyancing solicitor, Watson, who have no clear purpose beyond a reluctance to being pushed around by other people.

As you would expect from this combination of set and characters, much of the fun comes from hustling separate groups through the house, meeting each other by sight seconds. And on this semi-and-hits level, the play and Michael Rudman's production are well up to the expected virtuoso standard in terms of character, though, the compliment to Travers goes too far. There is a sense of Ayckbourn, the most relaxed of comedians, warming towards farce introducing outrageous bits of plotting, costume (the landlord's old black motorbike hat), and high-pressure grotesques who turn out more distinguishable than amusing. Travers and Ayckbourn both take their stand on absolute truthfulness of character in facing situations, but the attempt to follow the prescription through in the Travers manner has led Ayckbourn, for once, to falsify human nature and produce anachronistic stage types instead of people. There is some exceedingly longish comedy from (Doris) Lillian and Nicola Pagett, but the performance to remember is Michael Maloney's Watson, solemn in suit and horn-rimmed spreading superficial bewilderment among all who try to follow his beautifully timed scrambled lines, and steadily transforming a mere verbal joke into a completely realised character.

I suspect that even the great *Mosby* row has already hit the American Press, and there is nothing much for me to do but sign on the grave. Fear O'Toole's return to the classical stage after a gap of 17 years, saved by a director and designer both coming fresh to Shakespeare, was quite as dreadful as anything you may have heard about it. Equally dreadful was the management's craven attempt to disown itself from the show, and the director.

Brian Forbes' upstanding manoeuvre to off-load all the blame onto the actors, Mountain, quivers and telephone book-shops continue to besiege the Old Vic Box Office, and the show is almost to embark on its Arts Council-backed provincial and European tours. What can be said in complete certainty is that O'Toole has added a permanent chapter to the history of the world's unlikeliest play. And strengthened the case of "director's theatre" by demonstrating almost that actors, left to themselves, always get it wrong.

While we are at it, two other theatrical legends have just gone up in smoke. Ron Danek's Japanese-based *Times of Athens* (The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon) has finally restored the unloved Shakespearean verse in a blazing masterpiece. And the Palace Theatre revival of *Othello*'s epics (Rogers and Hammerstein's supposed evocation of the American age of innocence as a rapidly self-serving lyric-law fable) I misinterpreted the Indian lobby did not turn out to lose it.

A menu of warmed-over musicals

by Karl Levent

Hollywood almost since its inception, has been fed and sustained by the creative talents of Broadway. Today still, the phrase "move right" has a magical ring for any playwright with a Broadway success on his hands. Hence when the process is reversed — when Hollywood feeds Broadway — it is something of a phenomenon.

Two new musicals of the season have this distinction, if distinction it is *Charlie and Algeen* is based on the film of the late series, *Charlie*, with

ATIONAL



P.J. Benjamin and his co-star Algernon (left) Charlie and Algernon

both ventures originating from the novel by Daniel Keyes, *Flowers from Algernon*. *42nd Street* is direct from the famous Warner Brothers film of the same name that was first seen in 1933.

The reason for this change in creative flow is probably an economic one. With the costs of musicals constantly escalating, producers are looking for tried and tested material. The ideal is a revival, the rush of these last season speaks for itself. The next best thing is a creation that has already proved popular with a wide audience. It has a certain "safety" and the fact that it is already known seems to be an asset, rather than a disadvantage. The prospect for the rights of a contrasting menu of war-and-peace musical dishes is none too cheering.

The premise for *Charlie and Algernon* seems original matter for a musical. The story of a pair of scientists who transform mice into geniuses, starting first with a mouse, Algernon, then moving on to Charlie, a brain-damaged bakery worker. Well, it's not *The Student Prince*. In proven, however, just as predictable and as sentimental. As soon as I heard Sandy Faison, as Charlie's teacher singing "Have I the Right to Change a Life?" I knew we were in for a musical fable about those Big, Bad, Scientists. There is also a basic uneasiness about this material that the show never surmounts.

Along the way, however, there are some pleasures. The music by Charles Strouse contains several superior songs, although the lyrics by David Rogers reduce their sprightliness to a pedestrian pace. P.J. Benjamin as Charlie does well in the later scenes and particularly in the title number, a well-conceived vaudeville turn. In this he shares the stage with Algernon, the spikiest white mouse in the business. Algernon here does a soft-shoe and succeeds in charming where other



Musical Referees and Champions in 42nd Street

stage animals have failed. (He has an understudy? What were the auditions like? The mind boggles.)

If Algonquin had been in *42nd Street* he would have had to learn to tap. *42nd Street* is the type of musical where the cast bursts into a tap dance and the audience bursts into applause. It is billed as "The Song and Dance Fable of Broadway", which looks suspiciously like a way of getting round the corner aspects of the 1933 film.

This production has itself become a fable. The show's producer is David Merrick, one of Broadway's more optimistic and fabulous creatures. The director and choreographer was Gower Champion. Lots of scrapping on the road, where Champion became ill. Into New York, where Merrick would not allow the previews to play to an audience. At last the opening night. Merrick steps forward after the final curtain to announce to audience (and cast) the secret he had kept all day: Gower Champion was dead. He had died of a rare blood disease earlier

in the day. The cast and audience were first stunned, then from each side of the footlights there was open weeping. The bitter irony was that *42nd Street*, which is rife with showbusiness clichés, had been upstaged by its own circumstances.

The loss of Gower Champion is indeed a blow to Broadway. He was probably the most talented director the post-war musical theatre has produced. Even with mediocre material he succeeded in supplying a gloss that deflected too penetrating an examination. And when he was in full sail, say as in the waters' dance in *Hello, Dolly!*, he was unsurpassed.

His magical touch is evident in the dances in *42nd Street*. My favourite is everyone tapping their hearts out on huge silver dollars in "We're in the Money". The dances are witty and have a surety of tone not too evident elsewhere in the proceedings.

The other strength of the show is the score. A whole songbook with music by Harry Warren and lyrics by Al Dizon has been strung together to

provide the show with a musical backbone to see it through its siller moments. Harry Warren is one of the unsung heroes of American popular song; he has never quite received the acclaim which is his due. Perhaps this will bring him into the spotlight again.

42nd Street is a big show, and in these days of the mini-musical, it's rather refreshing. It has a cast of about fifty, and there are lots of scene changes designed by the ever reliable Robyn Wagner. The larger-than-life style of the piece is best caught by Jerry Orbach (the producer), Tammy Grimes (the star) and Carol Cook. For tongue-in-cheek style the juvenile, Lee Ray Reams, best demonstrates how to walk the tightrope between period musical style and high camp.

Perhaps *42nd Street* is not the musical Gower Champion would have chosen as his swan song. Still, he does it proud. It's a pity the show doesn't quite return the favour.

No doubt *42nd Street* is going to make a lot of people happy and David Merrick, rich

FILM



HE'S AN INFINITE
RESCUEE

STIR — Close to being great

Anybody who sees enough films over enough years is bound to discover one unpleasant truth: he/she can take almost without flinching any realist depiction of the lower depths in a foreign country, for instance *Fast Driver* and *Mean Streets* from the US, *Plum Cocoo* and *Scum* from the UK, *Los Olvidados* from Mexico, *La Strada* and *Chimes* (B from Italy).

But when it comes to one's own backyard, that's different. So I expect about 95 per cent disapprobation for Stephen Wallace's *Stir*, which is having a screen showing to make it eligible for awards and will then go back under wraps for a while.

Stir will not make a nice Saturday night at the movies. It is full of terrible physical violence and negative dirty words. There is nothing about a prison to groundbreak a vicious theft. There are no women to take attention away from enraged men on both sides of the bars. I don't know what other people at the press preview were doing but I spent some of the time with my hands over my eyes as the beatings proceeded.

Having said all that, and having the greatest fears for its success at the box office, I think it is a good film and that parts of it come close to being great. It is the first feature of an immensely talented director, the same Stephen Wallace who made *Love Letters from Jericho Road* and *Common Men* and *The Others*. I can only wonder why he set himself such a punishing task, first off, and how he persuaded the NSW Film Corporation to give him the money to make it. It can hardly fail to attract some flak.

Stir as the title indicates is set in a prison where there is an extremely bad relationship between inmates and guards. Perhaps the relationship is always bad everywhere. It becomes worse with the return to jail and to old friends and enemies of Chas Jackson, a tough-

determined to do his six months with as little trouble as possible and get out. The difficulty is that he is in a bad jail where warden and prisoners make it impossible for him to be low and say "hello". He is flushed into action, almost against his will.

The big set pieces are not which achieve as much as for some prisoners and a finished jail for all. There is no hope, and not even any anger left when it is over.

The appalling events of *Stir* are made bearable because Wallace's direction is so imaginative, crisp, un sentimental, non-hesitant, often witty and even occasionally funny. I suspect he has got it pretty right since the script is by Bob Jensen, who happened to be an inmate of Barham Gaol at the time of the 1974 riots, the ones that have since been so heavily publicised in NSW newspapers.

Wallace has assembled a formidable cast, some of them with unfamiliar faces. The most familiar one belongs to Bryan Brown, who must be the busiest actor in Australia.

Brown plays Chas Jackson, humiliated in prison for shoplifting. His scenes are the crux as denouncing, and Chas indeed looks humiliated when it is mentioned. Brown's style of acting won't go out of fashion because he has so few mannerisms, apart from a nose-hard stare. But then we have not had much chance to see him except in the context of a harsh environment, *Cash* + *Child* being the exception.

Chas Jackson is quite a complex character, strong but desperate and debased, unable to escape his position — back in jail again — with what he expected of life the last time he got out. But Brown's Chas Jackson does not dominate the performance.

Dennis Miller gives a remarkable portrayal of a wily crook, cynical inducer of a young clerk (Michael Dwyer) who has been backing slow horses with the bank's money. Miss Phipps inspires contempt and pity as a warden who regains earlier instability and tries to explain herself to Chas, who casts a cold eye on her. Ted Robshaw and Paul Scottsdale, both known and new. Robshaw, an Englishman, has been working as a teacher — are quite mesmerising as different types of prison officers. Gary Waddell gives an inspired portrait of instability, the man on the jail clock tower.

There is a notable lack of cliché in the characters and characterisations, perhaps. Chas, the scruffy veteran warder, is a new man, but we have to assume that Jensen knows best.

The film was produced by Richard Brennan, edited by Henry Dangar, photographed by Geoffrey Butler with music by Cameron Allen.

It occurs to me that people who think that Robert Barker's *Porridge* series gave a fair presentation of prison life are in for a bit of a shock.



Bryan Brown, Dennis Miller, Phil Mulcahey and Gary Waddell in *Stir*

pageants wherein the choreographic element settles down to simple repetitions and what is intended for is a simple upheaval born on creating an 'organ of the soul'. Nowhere is this more apparent than in these works but I managed to see at the Brunel Forest National, *Die Welle*, a work that celebrates in *Die Welle* parading around in begoggled leather shorts and feathers (a la Elton John) as the incarnation of poetic feeling, in the millenary and woolly expanses of his *Neue Faust* a very fine adaptation of the second part of Goethe's metaphysical drama of the same name.

One realises that Bejart thinks he is leading his audience into new realms of experience... a heightening of spiritual awareness, and for the limited awareness of the Kabal Ghoson, Lord of the Ring-ter he probably is, but to anyone willing to push through his concepts to his cul-de-sac and analyse his means, it emerges as a very sentimental, unexploited and unusual reaction to very ancient and spiritual themes. The actual dancing in what we have seen through in high class cabarets and TV spectacles for years, for all his intentions. The dancers are presented as critics in their own right; they do not enact his cosmic themes, they tell it, with as much sexual allure as possible. All of this might still be excused trying to package itself in mystic revelation is rather repulsive, but although he tries to stretch the barriers of theatrical form etc he obeys one cardinal rule of showmanship: he never tries to outrun his audience, he gives them what they expect and then some.

Five years ago, the Wuppertal Dance Theatre was a minor provincial dance group that was hardly taken any note of outside of Germany. Now, the company along with Jiri Kylian's Nederlands Dans Theatre is regarded as one of the most powerful and unique forces in European dance. It is not just that Pina Bausch is a staunch feminist and every one of her works exposes the battle of the sexes as a veritable cause. It is because the works created (and they are a group effort really) are put across with such gutsy raw power that you are thrown back in your seat and veritably forced to watch them, transfixed even while your hair stands on end.

Pina Bausch first came to prominence when her version of the *Rite of Spring* was created. It is not a pleasant work. She sees it not as a elemental evocation of rebirth and regeneration, but takes the huge upheaval of the music as the last desperate spasms of a society at the verge of collapse and self-immolation. The solitary woman at the ballet and dancing herself to death and literally tearing at her body, is not seen as the virgin sacrificed in a fertility ritual, she is the last warrior of the Holocaust,

humour spawned by her version of *Jill Saw on Death: Saw of the Middle Class*. On the occasion I saw this ballet a dual Sylvia Sans as the singing Annie and Australian Ballet as dancer Meryl Tankard as the dancing Annie. *Death Saw* is a laconic parody of a ballet.

There are shames and shames and bumps and grinds, all of them set up to reveal how society puts a low value on a woman as an entity and a high grade upon her mythical qualities as hand maid to Men. A person can laugh at a ballet like this, but it still sticks in the throat.

A few evenings with dance like this convinced me that the dance scene in Europe, although it may be narrow and used from each other side uses the best of each other to create something of its own as a tribal scene, cannibalistic but energetic.

Far more lively than the opera scene that pumps out tired old pieces in tired old versions, or the European struggle theatre scene that relies more on the vocative power of its scenic designers than the natural energy of its actors or its scripts.

Nowhere is this more apparent than with the new and reimagined *Nederlands Dans Theatre* which came to the fore once again due to the appreciating power of Czech born Jiri Kylian. The company no longer has modern dance classes, it is given over to classical ballet classes, but the way

that Kylian has reworked that scene is a major achievement.

Kylian states in the two greatest influences on his style, his first ever teacher Yvonne Zumbrovec, who now teaches name at Flinders University Drama School and who is in my opinion, the single greatest artist that school has and John Cranko and Anne Washburn of the once great Stuttgart Ballet.

Kylian is a master out of the traditional mould, and like Cranko and Balanchine, stretches the boundaries of what we think classic dance forms can encompass even further.

He uses classical ballet technique in a way that looks lesser and more original than anything a lot of the so-called 'modern school' could ever imagine.

Classical offers for its couple a loose, fluid, dance and folk mannerisms that gradually develop beyond the ethnic into almost a synthesis of human feeling. Teachers of the *matraka* or *harapase* are used in a starting point for digressive classic ballet narratives.

Kylian, like Balanchine doesn't give any programmatic motifs to explain his ideas (unlike Bopart), but unlike Balanchine he is not so much concerned with the body per se, but with the humanitarian death and hopes of people and their predicaments, young and old, that can have such a rich form and mode of expression in the dance.



Jiri Kylian's *Palais National*

An exciting finale to the 1980 season of the Australian ballet.

Following on the successful tour of The People's Republic of China, and the inaugural tour of Australian cities and major country centres of The Dancers Company, the Australian Ballet is embarking on a guest star-filled last three months of the year in Melbourne and Sydney.

In Melbourne the first thrill is the presentation of Russian dancer Aleksandr Godunov in the role of Prince Sigismund in *Swan Lake*. It was in this role that Godunov made his debut with the Bolshoi Ballet and began his spectacular ascent to international fame. While with the Bolshoi, he also danced Vostok in *Anne Karoline*, Don Jose in *Carmen*, Basil in *Don Quixote*, and Albrecht in *Giselle*.

Since his debuts last year, he has become a member of American Ballet Theatre and regularly appears in guest artist with major western ballet companies.

The Melbourne season of *Swan Lake* will consist of seven performances (9-25 October) at the Palais Theatre, St. Kilda, and will also feature Michela Karkulac and Joanne Michel in the role of the Swan Queen. Joanne Michel's debut in this role of roles is the result of ballerina Marilyn Rowe's unexpected indisposition, and is surely in the tradition of "theatrical breaks." 21 year old Joanne is a soloist in The Australian Ballet and first claimed critics' attention with her appearance as The Queen of the Dryads in *Don Quixote*. Since then, she has danced the Leading Ballerina in *Ashtor Imperial* (replacing injured Michela Karkulac at the last minute), and several leading roles with The Dancers Company on their recent tour. The double role of Odette/Odile is the greatest challenge of her career to date.

The season of *Swan Lake* will be followed in Melbourne, by a work of Cuvellier (17-23 October) featuring Sir Robert Helpmann in his inimitable interpretation of one of the Ugly Swans, with Ray Powell as the other.

The role of Cinderella and the Prince will be danced by each of the company's principal artists alternately.

Following the extended performance of *Swan Lake* and *Cinderella*, and in a separate studio altogether, some thorough prepara-



Aleksandr Godunov. Photo: Martin Scorer



Valentina Kozlova.

tions are being made for the special 8-performance non-subscription season in Sydney's Regent Theatre, of *Anne Karoline*. This season will serve as the Australian debut for beautiful Russian

ballerina Valentina Kozlova, who relinquished her status of Principal Artist in the Bolshoi Ballet when she and her husband Leonid Kozlov defected in the U.S. after the Bolshoi's last performance in Los Angeles. Kozlova is one of those fortunate beings in whom the gods seem to have combined extraordinary facial and physical beauty with a strength and tenacity which enables her to tackle any role, ranging from those requiring the utmost lyricism to the greatest virtuosity. *Anne Karoline* will indeed be a treat to those who will be seeing in Sydney (27 October - 3 November).

Also at the Regent Theatre, Sydney and immediately following *Anne Karoline* The Australian Ballet will present Sir Frederick Ashton's *Cinderella* featuring Sir Robert Helpmann once more.

Spanning the seasons in Melbourne and Sydney, rehearsals for the new *Three Musketeers* have been going on. The production department in Runcorn Road, Flemington have been in high gear for months, working on the costumes, special effects and scenery for this mammoth new production from Andre Prokofsky. *The Three Musketeers* is created by the same team who gave us *Anne Karoline* (Prokofsky, Peter Farmer, Guy Wolfenden) and the result promises to be every bit as colourful, exhilarating and popular with audiences, as that work is. — Andrew Prokofsky has dreamt up some wonderful sword fighting sequences and infatigably for the Musketeers themselves and the "action" is interspersed with some magically beautiful pas de deux. While this well, I think, prove to be a real mean ballet, in that it will show off to great advantage, the strength of The Australian Ballet's line-up of male dancers, it will also help in being into the public eye as an up and coming young talent, Sheree Raymont, who is playing the role of the Queen of France (temporarily extended for Marilyn Rowe).

The other female principal roles are those of Milady, (Michela Karkulac) and Constance, (Ann Jones) lady in waiting to the Queen of France.

The seven male principal roles are: d'Armenon (Kevin Coo), Buckingham (Gary Norman), *The Musketeers* (Dale Bailey, David Smith, Pauline Wharton, etc), Cardinal (Colin Peasley), The King of France (Ken Whitmore).

There are seventeen scenes in the three acts, which include peasants, waitresses, soldiers, beggars, children, the Cardinals' guards, and even fire-eaters.

The *Three Musketeers* will premiere in the Opera Theatre of the Sydney Opera House on 28 November and will run until 23 December. In Melbourne it will play 9-13 December 1981 in the Palais Theatre, St. Kilda.

OPERA



SIR DAVID
WHITE

Runs and Revivals

Confusing runs and revivals monopolised the efforts of the Australian Opera during September, as the company prepared to launch its new production of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* which looked on paper as if it could well prove to be the unequalled highlight of this year's winter season at the Sydney Opera House.

None of the other three new productions was exactly a disaster at opening, but none was exactly a triumph either. *I Macbeth* was played by all health which constituted Joan Sutherland's male support, or at least reduced it from spectacularity to ordinariness. *Maison Lemon* needed a considerable running-in period and a new *Maison* before it achieved its own best form. *Karna Kabareto* fell far short of achieving the potential impact it ought to have achieved largely because the mercurially versatile and appealing talent of Marilyn Richardson was for once at least overwatched if not actually smothered.

All had their moments before they completed their runs of the season, but there were no electrifying evenings at the theatre of the sort that one rationally hopes for with every production but so seldom experiences.

Yet perhaps the greatest and most significant test of the mettle of an opera company is its ability to cope with a joint opening performance: to digest the disorderly but revenue-invincible draws, and go on to remove the situation. And such was the achievement of the AO with this year's Sydney revival of *The Barber of Seville*, which I commented upon adversely in these columns last month.

Cast and conductor changes had yet to affect this year's *Barber* revival by the time I saw it a second time at a matinee performance, but the improvement was so great it was very hard to believe it was the same production. The sparkle that had been so appallingly absent at opening was there in abundance — from the three central characters in particular, all of

whom had been badly deficient before, but far more importantly, in the final analysis, from conductor Peter Seymour, whose improvement between the two performances could only be described as spectacular.

The overture, which had been unappealing on opening night, simply bubbled along with the effervescent of champagne as the manner — as it ought and the conventions of style established before the curtain went up was maintained almost all afternoon.

The odd imperfections were still there, the momentary lapses of ensemble that are all but inevitable with works like *The Barber*, but the feel of the performance was consistently right.



Adrian Fawcett and Allen Fights in AO's *The Barber of Seville*

And the improvement in the guidance of the helmsman was complemented at many turns by significantly better performances from those on stage — in particular the two men who are so crucial to the effectiveness of any performance of *The Barber*.

John Copley's 1977 *Fra Diavolo* also re-created the AO repertory during the month under review, featuring so many cast changes it was almost a new theatrical experience. Judged by the harshest criteria, it ought to have been a pale shadow of its original self since none of the cast changes could objectively be considered an improvement on the original either on paper or in the event.

Originally, it almost seemed that the production was being mounted as a vehicle for the considerable virtuoso talents of Robert Gard in the title role and Isabel

Buchanan as Zerlina, but it succeeded this time round not only without them but without the considerable talents of Dennis Olsen in the major supporting role of Don Alvaro.

The new Zerlina, Angela Denning, is no Buchanan either in the bell-like clarity of voice department or the immoderate vocal appeal of swoonpokes, but she is a considerable asset to the company in the virtuoso soprano field and she proved a resoundingly in this series of *Diavolo*.

Her performance seemed pale, at times, only when viewed in the retrospective context of Buchanan's in the same role, more important, in the context of this particular season it succeeded quite nicely. In particular, her big Act II aria was a viable display of technical virtuosity that was quite dazzlingly effective even if one could have wished for more sheer vocal power, but that will no doubt come with increasing maturity, and cannot be forced prematurely without grave risks.

Similar comments could be made about Denning's dramatic realisation of Zerlina, what there was of it was quite good, but it never quite managed to be bigger than life, which is what any fully insured stage performance even aspires to one way or another.

Fra Diavolo is the sort of role that knows like Amos Austin, who looks inherently good and sing quite well but is prone to woodenness in the acting department ought to be given because of the pressure they inevitably exert on a performer to loosen up and act with commitment.

Austin is not yet in the class of Robert Gard as an actor-singer and may well never be — which is no insult, of course, for Gard is an exceptional all-round performer despite the fact that he is given so few major parts by the AO's casting boards that it is evident they disagree with this assessment.

Nevertheless, Austin's *Diavolo* was a very considerable personal success, well won, predictably, but — not so predictably — aided with a flamboyance not seen from this performer before. He even managed to twist the odd corkscrew round his index finger while singing to his Laurel-and-Hardy-style benchesmen a feat akin to patting one's stomach and rubbing one's chest simultaneously I should think, or propelling a spinning wheel and singing simultaneously, as is required of the leading man in Flotow's *Martha*, about which I shall say more in a moment.

Austin, of course, was the original romantic tenor lead in this production, the none-too-bright soprano Lorenzo, a role

fallen over the first round by Paul Ferris, a state well but in no way remarkable.

Peeta is a normally convincing actor, and seemed on this occasion to have perhaps fallen into the trap of trying to make *Everest* into a flesh-and-blood human being rather than the creature he needs to be — at least in this Copple production. No doubt there are other ways of looking at *For Everest*, but this production is as purposefully superficial as its blatantly phony sets and exaggerated costumes, with the result that everyone is almost like the same same.

The other major new face in the cast for this series of *Danvers* was Gordon Wilcock, taking over the role of Lord Alenby originally created by Dennis Olsen. Wilcock said that the moviegoers feel affronted Olsen in the Lady Patricia of Heston Begg, and made a very good list of the part. His performance lacked something of the comic appeal of Olsen's, but then Olsen is something of a genius in this area.

And the costume department of the A.D., and perhaps the original designer Michael Sirooni, deserve special credit for coming up with a miraculously accurate depic-
tion of Wilcock that was in the same time-space different to that designed for Olsen's skinny shape three years ago, and equally effective in sending up Wilcock's enormous ego.

It almost goes without saying that Beggs herself, always a marvellous actress as well as singer, recreated Lady Pamela with all the perfect, charming, and, of course, very delicious little scenes in which she and Dracula edge themselves together under Lord Alcock's very cap of tea come off nearly as well this year as it had before, with Glen and Gard playing the men of the house.

And Gracie Ever made as nice a mock-Hardy as before, and John German a nice mock-Laurel of a newcomer; and Richard Bonyon put the whole thing together with considerable good humor — enough to

satisfy fully, probably anyone who had not seen the original version, and to provide a good many moments of pleasure even to those who had.

Don Fouquart and Marsha were presented in Brisbane by the Queensland Opera Company for an overlapping season late in September and early October, with considerable artistic success but disappointing results at the box office.

Perhaps because it is anyhow the greater work, I found the Pasquale more satisfying than the *Marshe*—particularly because of Russell Smith's abnormally upon-an-pony portrayal of Pasquale himself and the spacious structure of John Wilson.

Thus Pasquale, of course, borrowed Tom Longwood's sets and costumes seen originally a few weeks earlier in *Adolescence* when Longwood also directed the piece for State Opera. But the story bearing the nature of marriage between Sofronis Melitoniou and Don Pasquale was thankfully free in evidence on the Brisbane stage and many details of the production itself had been changed for the better.

Yemth was a skerry-on-a-rook Pasquale rather than the more usual rotund gae, but he was also an unusually female one, though not lacking in humor when it was required. Paul Neal earned in one of the best performances I have ever seen from him in the important supporting role of De Malatesta: he had just the right mixture of deviousness and good humor required to bring off the man effectively.

Flying back to Italy, game director Tony Rulifson's *Norina* was extremely effective, particularly at the vital moment when Piquale drops his guard momentarily to reveal he has really been wounded by her carryings-on expertly directed by Mikael: no doubt she responded by a first show of compassion to great effect. But she sang nicely rather than creepily and there were moments when her characterisation lagged disconcertingly.

The *Men* featured nice performances from Phyllis Ball in the title role and Margaret Russell as her companion Julia, and a nicely lappish Sir Trinram Mickleford from Geoffrey Cook.

But Anthony Bonfili's *Lancelot*, though nicely sung, lacked something of the nuance that should enable the character more-at-ease to sweep Lady Harriet, shimmering as "Martha" off her feet at first sight. Dena Wenz's Plunkin, on the other hand, was quite excellent all around – good humored strongly sung, dramatically convincing. It was by far the most satisfying performance I have yet seen.

John Thompson's production had some new touches—particularly the inclusion of the regimental bandstresses of Wagnerian proportions into the Western scene.

branding spears about with all the ferocity of the Vikings, and the jets, uncredited in the program, were particularly noticeable, rapid and efficient.

The other major regional production of the month was State Opera's realisation of Franz Lehár's *The Land of Smiles*, in Adelaide — an effort that had many merits, in the final analysis the inborn problems of the work itself made it less than wholly successful.

Peter Cooke designed a marvellously picturesque Pricing for the second acts, supplemented by appropriately colourful Chinese costumes, but his Act I Vienna was significantly less successful, due no doubt to constructions of the genre written by Anthony Beech's director who excelled, mesmerizing many of the inferior weaknesses of the piece and unforgivingly condemning its altogether

Fausto and all. *The Jewel of Shander* proved to be a marvellous vehicle for Thomas Edmonds in the central role of Prince Sou Chong, the Chinese noble who falls in love with a Vietnamese girl and eventually sacrifices her on the altar of his political marriage.

He sang quite beautifully all right, and managed to convey effectively the dilemma in which Sam Chiong is crushed.

Judith Henley was adequate as the girl in question, the Coconino Lion, though she did not fully exploit the potential of the part either in dramatic or vocal terms. William Bamford provided excellent support as the first husband in the tragedy of her life and Andrew Clarke was a delightful caricature of a coach.

Honey Krups conducted with meticulous Wagnerian style, which was as it had to be, and ought to be—for there is scarcely a bar of orientalism in this opera, even if it does purport to be set in China nearly three-quarters of the time.

DAVID GREEN is editor of *Opera Australia*.

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THEATRE/NSW

[illegible]**Picturesque and entertaining**

THE MERRY WIVES OF
WINDSOR

Re: Harry O. Thompson

[illegible]

Conservative wisdom has it that Elizabeth I wanted to see that every popular and well-loved knight, her John Falstaff of the *Henry IV*'s, lie in a low. Accordingly she commissioned a court performance of a play, in Windsor. That play, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, seems to have been written begrudgingly, if not not by Shakespeare, exploiting the disguise (love comedy) game that succeeded much better in *John Falstaff*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*.

Fabrizzi plans, in a modest assault on the words of two friends' girlfriends. Pond and Page, whose power struggle they control. The words leave the plan and set about to have some (but in the end Knight's expense). Two rather repetitive sentences, some assignments, result in the backing and thinking of Fabrizio, on the one hand, and the emergence of him dressed as the "the woman of the world," a suggested attack on the other. This Fabrizio hardly the spiritual figure of the *Monks*, allows himself to be further called as *Monks* by

Hunter in Woodson Great Park. Wearing a set of Oakland-ish jeans, like a cosplayer, a teenager looking for his Duran. Fiddling in a neighborhood, set upon and snatched by a horde of drooping furies. Finally, he is exposed by the Mustangs. Page and Rand take down the game knight slides forward off his stand, strutting a head first. The play ends with a winner not a hero.

There is an underpin, too, in which Anne Page, "Oh, sweet Anne Page!" is wooed by an unlikely clutch of suitors. A monk, a fool and a luckless seaman

The whole thing fails to come together as a play. It has all the disadvantages of a sequel and none of the speed and vitality of an inspired work. Verdi's *Falstaff* makes quite sense as an afterthought.

Abstract. The amount of defecates the SPT

the company, who can do anything. To attempt the *Where Have I Lived* extravaganza, Mark Rodden's updating, Philadelphia Windsor to high Victorian pastoral, A cock crows, the joys of pine, splendidly, evoking the atmosphere of those charmed of old country parsons, which marked the end of the nineteenth century. The last *Black of moments*, the Victorian reform, too, much, accommodates the belief in James which is important to the play. Love is Carroll and Charles Kingsley, would have interested.

The production's main industrial look at Kevin Frederickson, designer, and James Lewis, lighting designer, are a happy partnership who bring us the earth and natural tones. Of course, *Wicked*, the original element of the musical, is these scenes, and



Source: *Survey of Social Attitudes in 1980*, by the Survey Research Center, University of Michigan.

the great dreamland of Windsor Great Park (is right). The atmosphere is as fresh as a soap commercial, except for Falstaff's lodgings, which rise in all their down-at-heel glory from the bowels of the stage.

The acting is highly competent, although in some instances one suspects, compensating for the material. Thus Falstaff is a mere costume display, but Max Phipps brings dignity and wit to the part. Justice Pann is very much in control of Mistress Quickly, and most enjoyable John Allen, the Welsh parson, and Lex Marinos, the French doctor, do very well on the two linguistic poles of the piece. My Marinos is imaginative, clever and nicely understated by my "French" Robin Hamlyn's Ford, afraid of being cuckolded, is disappointingly limited. Redmond Phillips' Justice Shallow (in a Bath chair), is well observed and very funny, as is his nephew, Bruce Spence's Abraham Slender. Bill McCusker's servant to Slender, Peter Simple, is a delightful study. Jerrold Clare and Carol Raps, as the merry wives themselves, shine and sparkle as they deserve. Alexander Hay makes his Pistol resonant classically, while Alan Tobin and Brandon Burke are truly Hogarthian as the other two followers of Falstaff.

A picturesque and entertaining production, this *Myon* Wives nonetheless leaves you a little unsatisfied, and thinking perhaps that Yeats, not Shakespeare, knew best.

About a thief, sexist and racist...

ERROL FLYNN'S GREAT BIG ADVENTURE BOOK FOR BOYS

by Anthony Barclay

Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book for Boys by Bob Grogan
The King O'Malley Theatre Company, The Sydney Sydney, opened 16 September 1981
Director: Len Marinos. Designer: Patrick Cook & Jimmy Campbell. Music: Mervyn Drake & Humphrey Murray. Props: Lighting: Russell Boyd. Sound: Light: Ted Clark
Cost: Flynn, Lex Spence, Lex Tobin, Ron Hamlyn, John Marinos, Bruce Bradley, John Allen, Greg John Allen, Robert Hughes
(Performance)

Alone and friendless in an empty bar, over potent drink raised limply to the hoarse waitress, Errol Flynn slides onto the rim of a piano which gives out a desolate, final bang. Blackness closes in and momentarily the all too pleasant drunk drops, and soon, to reveal a black-haired look that could have won an Oscar. Then with better 'n' more "I hate you forwards".



Lex Spence and Lex Spence in Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book for Boys. (Photo: Robert Hughes)

Black Out! Errol Flynn that charming, way, delirious hero of some fifty-five movies really hated himself or the world, or both. So much for your philosophy, Horatio.

There are other versions besides Rob George's and one that comes to mind is David Niven's chatty dog (in *The English Movie*). Flynn and Niven were sometimes flatmates and, no doubt in every sense of the term, "drinking buddies". Much of Niven's account is sentimental, coloured by the chauvinism of behind the screen antics, phlegm Moss and, dare one suggest, fond memories. But there is nothing rendered without comment indeed, their last chance meeting depicts a pulpy, blonde-faced Flynn, a man who has done himself "much damage" and now finds comfort in reading the Bible. Perhaps Niven employs the Nick Carraway to Flynn Gatsby but he manages to achieve dignity and moments of pathos. The recreation of school-boy sex jokes that dominate some two thirds of the first act of Rob George's play has a style commensurate with throwing cotton-wool on a cripple—one begins to wonder who a cripple? Of course, it's only a musical and not to be taken seriously, or is it? Garra Hutchinson hit on the piece's implicit contradiction when he remarked at the M.T.C. production that a glorified in the very characterisation it sought to expose. The writer wants a two ways enjoy the fun but look at the satire.

Lex Marinos created the production with as much energy and business as it could muster. I don't know whether this was adopted as a strategy to cover the initial succession of longeurs but business (as resource and enterprise) as it was and text took quite some time to deliver.

In fact it was not until Ted Clark's marvellous swordlight sequence early in the second act that this occurred. Sean Seely after some initial unconscious settled into the business of being Errol with charm but Rob George's piece doesn't allow for much development, after all that, sweat and sweat in New Guinea or Hollywood is here only degree of style and more expensive drink. Similarly, Lex Spence stuck to the universal character of Lex Tudor with a persistence the part hardly merits. There was fine ensemble work and it would be mean minded to ignore the music of Mervyn Drake and Nancye Hayler's choreography and Patrick Cook Jimmy Cooper's white set with cartoon Errol drifting across the way. There were fine moments with Robert Hughes' Groucho and Anne Grogan's Elizabeth Taylor. Brenda Gifford's decent housewife and John Hamlyn Mervyn Drake as the brother Warren and so on.

One wishes the King O'Malley Company the very best but hopes that the show of plays is not really as this. It was a bit like being at a misty post-mortem in the middle of a rotten wake.

Stimulating but puzzling

VOYPOUR

by Hugh Craig

Voypour by Ben Jonson. National Theatre Company, Sydney NSW. Opened October 1, 1992. Directors: Neil Armfield and John Bell. Designers: Ben Carpenter, Lighting: Dragan. Music: Leverage. Composer: William. Actor: John, choreographer, David Axman.

Cost: Volpour: John Bell, Mosca: Paul Bettman, Corvino: Barry Otto, Celia: Linda Cropper, Lodovico: John McTernan, Bonario: Colin Firth. Properties: Colin Firth.

The National's new *Voypour*, directed by Neil Armfield and John Bell, is a stimulating, puzzling production. It solves problems about lesser characters — about how the play's unmythologised villains and spoils-masochists can be brought to life on stage — while it leaves questions about the relationship and implications of the two central characters unanswered.

The plot revolves around *Voypour*, a wealthy gentleman of Venice and his servant Mosca. *Voypour* aims to become even wealthier by pretending to be an heir lost long ago, so that the suitors who hope to inherit his money bring him expensive gifts to recognise themselves. Things start to go wrong first when *Voypour* is mistaken with a passion for Celia, the wife of one of the suitors, and is caught by Bonario trying to rape her, and then when Lodovico comes on stage with the courage help of the suitors that he is innocent and that Bonario and Celia are guilty; he begins his own search to enjoy the spectacle of the disappointment of the suitors who find that he has left all the money to Mosca. Mosca takes advantage of the situation to step into his master's shoes, and won't let him back. With the partnership broken, the deception is exposed in court, the guilty are punished and the innocent rewarded. A subplot involves Sir Polio Woudie, who is convinced that the most ordinary events are part of a horribly intricate Jesuit plot, and Peregrine, another Englishman, who plays up to Sir Polio's fantasies.

Of the three suitors hoping to inherit *Voypour*'s wealth, Corvino must be a broad comedy part in any production, and his despicable was played here for all it was worth by John McTernan (his glasses were so thick that he took his own reflection in a mirror to be *Voypour*). But Barry Otto's Corvino was a real discovery.

Corvino is a stagey villain, and looked right as mixed masochist, Spanish look and a flamenco dress shirt. He got his teeth and grimaced outrageously when his



John Bell as Bonario's *Voypour*

evil plans were thwarted, trembled till the veins stood out in his forehead and even fell quivering to the floor. His frustration Volpour (Tim Echee) was a slow-witted Donarula, turning stiffly to Mosca's manipulation and ponderously effective an advocate to the court.

With such lavishly coloured characters — suggest around them Bonario and Celia, Johnson's virtuous young pair, no longer seemed to have wandered in from another kind of play altogether (as it sometimes appears). They belonged rightly in a gallery of stock types: Colin Firth's Bonario, especially, was funny and fitting — a schoolboy with Clark Kent glasses, a plastic cover on his boxer and a jaw habitually dropped like Jerry Lewis's. Admittedly, Celia's hair did seem to be mainly pigtails and ughs, but this presented fewer problems for Linda Cropper as the heroine of a full-blooded melodrama, there mainly to move rape and rescue.

Sir Polio Woudie (Peter Collingwood) and Peregrine (Colin Firth again) did obviously belong to a different play, though, and seemed most at home when they moved in to the sides with the audience. The scene where Peregrine was made to impersonate the voices of all the merchants while Sir Polio had under a tortoise shell was one of the few disappointments of the production.

The set was a decayed shrine of the last century, cluttered like a grotto with chipped cupids and upturned in faded plush. In the left sat a satyr-like organ, to provide emphatic chords at moments of high drama and to accompany *Voypour*'s household troops of Nana, Androgyn and Curvone in their songs. The best of

these songs made a surprisingly sinister Karl Weill number ("Free from all dreams") out of their warm-up for *Voypour*'s path to a scene of Marston.

The unanswered questions were about *Voypour* and Mosca. Their relationship remained a puzzle. *Voypour* was rapaciously affectionate and Mosca easily capable, like an ancient comic with his bedpan, where we might have expected a hard of headcity anticipating the setting of the "Fox-trap" in which he snared his master. Paul Bettman as Mosca gave us a subtly Ariel, intent on performing and outperforming his master's wishes. When patron and petron did fall out, it was with conviction but without venom.

John Bell's *Voypour* was a violent, even tortured character. He reached great heights as the "grand voluptuary", faintly evoking (though delight in Celia and reeking a barren corpse under his gown to prove that the Turk was indeed no more "normal" in his pleasures than *Voypour*). Yet sickness and torment shackled him too, in the cramps brought on by his act of fecklessness before the court and in the agony of Lady Polio's relentless attention. A curious sense of inertia attached itself to him, born of his role as a flawed parasite and as passive spectator of Mosca's astuteness, an inertia which his energetic performance outside his disguise (as the mountebank Sesto and as the court servant) did not quite overcome. But if the audience's reaction to this *Voypour* remained one of wary (if admiring) speculation, perhaps all that proved is that this is the right way to present the central character of Johnson's robust but disturbing play.

Failing in Love Again

By Michelle Field

In Jan Cornell's musical arrangements for Elizabeth Drake's *The Yarned Downstairs* (Avalon, November 25) (reviewed 25) Vogue Magazine's Lisa Anne Desrosiers

hunch, the first cabaret never appears at the climactic expensive New York night-spots, but at the New York equivalent of the National Drinkwater. However, the National Drinkwater is richly tight for the minutes of cabaret—there's too much "theatre" there and too little sympathy towards an audience for that kind of show.

In quickie before I confess my own admiration for Jan Cornell and Elizabeth Drake, I must say that this fail to escape their reputations as shocking friends and spunky disruptors of sexual power. I think that they are tough-minded enough to cut through the sentimental of their own gigs, but this leaves little edge to do so. There is an air of an early Reg. Luciano

performance about *Failing in Love* (Avalon). Elizabeth Cornell and Drake can learn to be more striking—a longer nod on the pubic but on the new nerve—on they can direct the direction of more sight-pokes, more falling off her words, and more of those returns which wear one day like slogans.

But Elizabeth Drake and Jan Cornell are also the next-best thing—and I myself am not sure "next-best" to what, except that they both have talent close to the top of what Australian culture can offer and it will survive the coming doom. I worry that Jan Cornell may be trying to be "next-best" to Robin Archer, and that would be a mistake, not because Archer's mistake but because Cornell's talent is to be steady, even towards intelligence. In fact, in which Cornell tries to get (as Robin Archer can get) that the show starts in stuggle Cornell's best "all" I think is to let him her own contradictions towards the audience, especially towards the men in the audience, and towards her partner Elizabeth Drake. The best slurs in the *Traveller*, if I were "son an, disapproving."

Although at that no towers haven't tried I doubt if I can properly persuade anyone

who hasn't been to the performance that it's also Elizabeth Drake's show. Drake names herself behind the electronic Yamaha for an hour, but she has allowed herself some wonderful lines which spill out slowly, in a motherly, modulated voice that is a perfect counterweight to Cornell's fading about her heavy emphasis. I thought Drake's voice was a great parody of the male keyboard-winner who can in a Cocktail War condescend the drinkers, and strikes a mood that I-Melrose-jockies will try to copy.

The show's best features are the lyrics, but only a third of the lyrics, the ones that are not hammered down in several sections. However, I thought *Failing in Love* (Avalon) partly is good for the two characteristics that these women create for themselves. It works as a "stage relationship" as they say, and the gist of the relationship is the way Elizabeth Drake always plays at being a provocatively appreciative but definitely less enthusiastic about Jan Cornell's songs than the audience itself are. Another words, they use the audience as a third party in their own relationship on stage. Perhaps that is one of the secrets of successful cabaret.



Elizabeth Drake and Jan Cornell in *Failing in Love*

Poetry... Images... Music

MAD SCENES

by Anthony Barclay

Mad Scenes: When But There's Cleveland Performing Again

Directed and devised by Terry O'Connell. *When But There's Cleveland Performing Again* is Michael's work. Characters are a *When But There's Cleveland Performing Again* is Michael's work. Characters are a *When But There's Cleveland Performing Again* is Michael's work. Characters are a

Characters are a *When But There's Cleveland Performing Again* is Michael's work. Characters are a *When But There's Cleveland Performing Again* is Michael's work. Characters are a

'FRINGE THEATRE IN THE METROPOLIS' Take One, Action.

A rapid shift from the circus of childhood and the party continues with a new game: "I guess who you are." Under the first hand of Oskar G. Hoffman, the world's greatest director, we begin to strip away the surface density of each of the five shadowy figures imprisoned on the black and white chess floor of an asylum. We move to the stage, to Hollywood, to empty space. To a silence the declaiming actor (in the grand style) can close questioning for a "perfect profile" (the great scene closes itself), a desperate search among his colours, blue and white and black, seeking one last theatrical distraction. It is amazing how John Parnham's words engender pure poetry to poignantly rendered by Greg Radford's over precise delivery and tense movement. The single red lightning line on his cheek the tornament tear of his madness. Then Holly de Ville (Jale Godfrey) with John's first balcony speech moving it from simplicity and purity to the wildly camp and dramatically incoherent "She's mad!" cheeks Gail, but to Oskar she's "wicked Holly, wicked wicked!" Now it's Gail's turn. Gail (Kim Duncan) the arthritic child-war, singing "When I grow up in a year or two or three,"

proseman, beautiful broken by her blindness. Oskar has only a milky quip that causes an instant of rebellion, the figures raise chairs above his head. But he can command of "Rouanne" and they are lowered to form a platform. Rouanne (Valerie Bader) her large black skirt now an

umbrella, opened and closed concealing three of the cast, looks like the lead from a Burt Reynolds frame. Cut off from the light down her upper body away and finds with Oskar for the child she is carrying. Now, at last, Oskar (Stephen Thomas) harnessed joins the game, standing from his white wheelchair cast director's chair. His hands, and expression animated, his hands and arms out into the space about him as he declares his greatest scene: white pained women, swirling in a ball of mirrors. Image upon image. Rouanne's plea is refused and she is driven back by disembodied hands as Oskar decides she is his "perfect instrument." Two angled lines of neon tubes light up towards the heavens as Oskar reaches the climax of his dream in a shriek, a cry. The lights dim to Michael Carlin's haunting piano melody and Gail the nurse rejects the solitary, dim figure on stage. She suggests he join the other patients upstairs and his body swings limp and back into the wheelchair back to the asylum. A slight light catches the face as he is wheeled on a hand, manual but tortured gun accompanies the words "Rouanne! I find interesting, so strong." The wheelchair passes between two shattered mirrors. The images are broken, the melody lingers.

The most remarkable thing about *Mad Scenes*, Theatre's third work, *Mad Scenes* is the way in which it transforms the most unremarkable series of clichés and stock events into a profoundly moving, coherent sequence of poetic images. There is at work here a quality at once vaguely European and very contemporary, one cannot find direct antecedents but, up to a point, one is inclined towards a writer like Brecht for parallels. Here dancing and skilled theatricality addresses itself to the audience, not the inherent narrative logic of the well made play. Words, movement, gesture and vocal arrangement of performers combine with music, sound, dance and lighting to create a logic of their own, one that nevertheless with conscious intelligence against its audience's experiences. The role of each character, apart from lack of appeal, are manifestly enormous,

obscure, but when it works it is sheer magic.

There is an instant quality to *Mad Scenes*, an immensely impressive exploration of acting crafts from the live performers. Valerie Bader, Kim Duncan, Jale Godfrey, Greg Radford and Stephen Thomas. Christos Kollar's choreography encompasses a range of dance styles and manner, a statement that suggests the visual and verbal textures of the work. One area that is lacking in much of our so-called "Fringe Theatre" is simply skills: here skills are in abundance. I found some moments lacking in clarity or the need for clear characterisation (eg the over ten, perhaps, of the puppet master) but these are very minor quibbles. Michael Carlin's music and sound added stunning dimensions to the work, the haunting, evocative piano of Holly's victory walk instantly touching on the powerful remembrance of mass scenes from the Hollywood genre, or the electrifying synthesised introduction to the circus scene. John Parnham's devised dialogue is witty and remarkably direct as it insinuates through stereotype Hollywood images and situations. The audience were able to respond quickly to the early scene "Rouanne! I find interesting" as the set of "Murder in the Metropolis" or the clanking one and wicked fall of Holly de Ville. Then a thoroughness in attention to detail that generated breathtaking. Each of these elements commanded interest on its own but the quality provided more, much more.

The omniscient setting of *Mad Scenes* is an asylum for actors. The work, entitled a "jumpy" the actors moves around a birthday party and farewell for Oskar with a number of unshocking scenarios. The initial scenes, as I said, provide no problem of recognition. But there is an overlapping of statements and a blurring of identities that provide clues to its more serious intent. The whole forms a ballet like flow that stubbornly refuses to conform to our usual narrative conventions. Profound at word and gesture, music and image speak alike into poetry. An asylum becomes

carnal becomes studio set fantasy and reality become elusive entities. The ball of threads is a prism of refracted dramatic statements at once beautiful and poignant, tortured and wildly funny. Family, love and sexuality, career, envy, success, transgression and failure, madness, freedom and death were all touched on — and this is really praise. Of course interpretation becomes subjective at moments but I found it interesting on my second viewing to note the gaps of recognition from various audience members during the performance as immediate context transformed into poetic statements.

Terry O'Connell devised and directed *Mad Sweeney*, but is the first to write the tremendous peeling of skills at work here. The *Limited Life Games* which has landed Music Box Theatre (the grant is from the Theatre Board of the Australian Council, with assistance from the Music Board) is near its end. The grant has allowed Terry to produce four shows: *Sweeney*, *The Depressive Darling* and other *Depress*.

now *Mad Sweeney* and shortly to come a completely revised *Depressive Darling*.

The first two shows attracted a lot of talk (scrapped by the occasional strong poetic Calabrese) and strength of dramatic definition were lacking so much so that (Robert Page wrote after *Sweeney* "what (Music Box) needs now is a total retreat to find a coherent approach... it appears a long way short of what is required for a highly ailing" (T.A. January 1980). Page's poem was well taken and Terry O'Connell admits it was "a very large step to move from the highly successful reaction of the Riverside Trucking Company to the metropolis. Murder! But while experiences and reactions of self-indulgence were made of the earlier work it would add that the very limitation of *Limited Life Games* is made or broken. These poetic inputs need time to live in on projects.

Terry O'Connell would like to extend the work done on *Mad Sweeney* to an exploration of set levels or works such as

The Seven Deadly Sins or Angels Discovered on Floor. He cites the influence of Giuseppe Capotoni on his style — an up-front, vocal theatre, full of statements by the performers. Of course such a style requires considerable skills and skills originate well in ensemble work. The establishment of high quality fringe theatre in the downtown he seems more likely to take following the cessation of the *Limited Life Games*.

The Cleveland Performance Space has no limitations — not the least of which can be keeping the audience away and moves.

But it has removed a lot of the pressure encountered in the *Sevens* at Centre. Terry makes this point not as a criticism of established venues but rather in the context of the play as essential to creative inspiration. The refinement of skills and development of new skills is a delicate enough matter and that seems to have worked well at Cleveland Street. As usual, the actors are learning to play various mystical instruments for the new *Depressive Darling*.



Next: Terry O'Connell directs *Mad Sweeney* at Cleveland Theatre. Back to *Mad Sweeney*.

THEATRE/QLD



STATE REP
DAVID ADDENBROOKE

Hits from Carmen

CARMEN

by Robert Kingham

Carmen presented by Arts Theatre Company Performance Centre, D.D.I.A.E., Toowoomba 1986 September 10 to September 19
Director: David Addenbrooke, Co-director: Peter Banks, Designer: Robert Macgregor
Cast: Carmen: Maria Lurighi, Don José: John Denning, Escamillo: Ian Cairnes, Captain: Ken Ineson



The Strugglers scene in D.D.I.A.E.'s *Carmen*. Photo: Garry Macgregor

Billed as the first local production of Grand Opera in Toowoomba, the first collaboration of the bands of Theatre, Music, and Visual Arts departments at the D.D.I.A.E., this production of *Carmen* is also the last major production statement of the Arts Theatre Company for 1980 and the last production mounted by David Addenbrooke who leaves the Institute to return to Perth in November.

Addenbrooke's three-and-a-half year stint with the D.D.I.A.E.'s School of Creative Arts has forced the Performance Centre and the Institute into significant prominence. Through a mixture of impressive work and a marvellous publicity machine Addenbrooke established the Arts Theatre Company as Queensland's first major theatre company in a provincial centre. The fear of this writer is that it will be a difficult position to maintain without a leader of Addenbrooke's charismatic presence and drive. As a twice song for a

big man, *Carmen* is about as big as you can get. It takes some paunch to pull such an enterprise off, let alone get away with it with a professional production team leading a student orchestra and a chorus of non-singers. Somehow or other the Addenbrooke-Banks-Macgregor team manage it.

Basically this production is a teaching exercise combining students from the three disciplines of the School of Creative Arts.

Music, Theatre and Visual Arts As a part of their studies, theatre students take a subject called 'Music Options' — in which they get to play chords in a musical production. In 1980 the vehicle is *Carmen* — with a chorus of forty. You have then a class project enriched by the presence of a professional production team and two visiting professional soloists.

The opera has been drastically cut to an overall length of two hours, strung together by a variety of unobtrusive animation. The result is described by Addenbrooke himself as 'Hot from *Carmen*' — it is both musically and thematically robust. Both the performers and the audiences (in their dozens) have a splendid time. John Denning and Ian Cairnes were obviously a great boon to the student chorus, who held their own far better than many a chorus of amateur would-be singers. All the ingredients spell for a popular success with the production it.

What makes this *Carmen* worthy of special note is the performance of Maria Lurighi in the eponymous role. Maria is a graduating music student who has spent a good deal of time walking the boards of the Arts Theatre in 'stranger' productions (among other things, she has played *Terza*). She has a remarkable voice combined with solid performing ability. The performance is riveting, the talent is great. One hopes that, in seeking to develop her voice she will be able to maintain her commanding stage presence. If so, we stand to gain a major star of the music theatre.

The main point of this review is unashamedly to herald a great new talent in Maria Lurighi, in the hope that when, in the future, she ventures forth, someone may be interested to see something interesting from the deep south. It takes a man of David Addenbrooke's vision and daring to give this artist a significant vehicle to display her skills — even at the cost of uprooting his own from the D.D.I.A.E. — as a demonstration of the extent of his achievement over the past three years.

unobserved entrances and exits are frequently called for. The set also enabled the action to be pushed out into the auditorium — previously a problem in one-room sets in this theatre.

While *ambiguity* and sexual stereotypes were the order of the day in the playhouse, the rest of the company were offering revolution (sexual and political) and subversion (date) at their alternative venues. Theatre 62 Susan Sewell's *Frontiers* arrived with positive reports from Melbourne and Sydney and maybe it was only these high expectations which occasioned its ultimately negative response. Though it may seem outrageous even patronising to say so, these expectations were confirmed by the author's programme note which deftly and accurately

sets out the major historical and ideological issues. But the play itself proceeds neither at this level of intellectual debate nor indeed does it offer characters who embody in convincing form the major issues.

In fact in one respect the play seems to come up with a profoundly conservative and neo-Marxist statement on the whole question of revolution and the way that power replaces death, and people become dispensable. The slender quotation from the Eighteenth Brumaire about history repeating itself firstly as tragedy, secondly as farce, is cited in the text, yet seems at odds with the play's presentation of history and the implied conclusions on the relationship between the masses (Stalin, Trotsky and Zinoviev) and the would-be

men of the popular and ultimately Trotsky and Zinoviev). As the play's end we are left with a negative view of the revolution and the suggestion that little could have changed it or well change it. Now this may be so, but it surely needs to be presented with rather more rigour than Sewell's characters manage in their exchanges and monologues.

Moreover, the play's prologue and epilogue, for all that they make a necessary historical point, seemed contrived and clumsy. Flashbacks are difficult to bring off on the stage and the audience's sense of the then now distance is confused by these two scenes which are historically relevant but call for a more focused theatrical realisation.

So too, some of the characters seemed somewhat flat and one-dimensional. John Noble's Kraus, the experimenter/intellectual, was an effective and at times powerful reading of the role, but with juxtapositions in the mass from violence-directed — at — the — prison (Rubin) to violent sex-in-a-standing position (with Anna) seemed obvious in their linking of the old Freudian questions of sadism and sexuality. It may be that the short rehearsal period for the play prevented the actors from exploring the complexities of the personal politics beneath the situation suggests.

So too, Lyons tackled what can be seen as the most difficult role in the play with a good feel for the character's dangers and strength. But the scenes which explored the relationship with John Noble's Kraus, though they began well, tended to wander — a problem which is at least in part attributable to the fact the author follows. The author seems never less — nor, indeed, more — than honest and attentive performance.

Sewell's tackling of propositions like the Revolution concerning its own children calls for more than that. For while there were individual scenes of power and violence — the scene in the subway carriage suggested simply by the actors rocking in time with the train's motion, while the lights went to and fro, the superbly staged scenes of violence between Noble's Kraus and Tom Considine's numbed and bewildered Rubin — the scenes exploring the dynamics of the personal political equation and the question of sexual and social roles seemed grey and at times even lifeless. The production in fact seemed more like work in progress than the finished product, but Sewell was high and the play's concerns and arguments could have been better served in a venue other than Theatre 62 — which demanded front-on playing throughout — and during a longer process of coming to terms with the play's structure and characterisation.



John Noble and John Saunders in *347C* - *Frontiers*

THEATRE/VIC



STAGE MAP
JEANNIE
LEWIS

Accolades for Jeannie

PIAF

by Colin Duckworth

Produced by **Pam Gerts**, Playhouse Theatre Company, production at the Comedy Theatre, Melbourne, Vic. Opened September 22, 1986.

Director: Murray I. England; **Musical Director:** Michael Frank; **Designer:** James Tate; **Choreographer:** Leigh Rumbin; **Lighting Designer:** Fred Wilkey; **Cost:** Paul Jessiman Lewis; **Town and Country:** Barry McGuire; **Lyrics:** Laurence Macdonald; **Angels:** Frank Matthews; **Devils:** James and Madeline; **Joan Millie:** John Clayton; **Maureen:** Lesley; **Victoria:** Elizabeth Ryan; **Thomas:** Robert McGuire; **Robert:** Bill and Eric Brown.

The twists of the artist as victim of a society or exploring society in total and attending Puf in part of it, but even more she is an example of the self-destructive urge of the creative spirit which finds life and too monstrous to bear.

Pam Gerts was attracted to Puf for her "quality of expression: the truth is her work, miraculous in a commercial genre." She admires her beauty, unlike Jesse Matthews and more like Grace Fells, she refused to perform "artificially she respected" and exposed her genuine success. Puf didn't let success spoil her, improve her. Pam Gerts' large show, her moving (not developing) from hard little crooner to hard little bitch with a soft spin only for well-endowed males. The sheer facility of Puf's selfish, self-indulgent and unpleasant nature, and the details of her unmissable life, are not worthwhile staging unless some sense is made of it all, unless some perspective is created by the story-teller. This Pam Gerts signals fails to do, although she certainly wanted to judge from her comments on Puf. How could it have been done? For example, by showing what Puf's songs and performances meant to ordinary, unhappy, suffering people whose needs she always expressed. Yes the life was a "tragedy" (in the popular sense of a wasted moment) but Puf's artists could be shown to have a positive value trans-

ding the privations and transient low-level words, and avoiding the overall impression of downward drag in the first anti-climatic scenes.

There is one moving scene in which Puf reveals to her lover the better Marcel, the source of her artistic strength and of her inability to cope with life, the only thing in the world that counts is performance; out there on your own flat afterwards, "what is there to come off for? You're only on your own again."

If the show were intended to be just entertainment, we should have been well pleased to have Jeannie Lewis doing an evening of Puf songs. The stark episode structure that is punctuated by the songs takes for ever to start and finish (although I don't recall looking so hopefully at my watch as the BBC production at the Abbey). No doubt by now the pace has improved, spurred on by the energy and sheer conviction of Jeannie Lewis, perhaps the second woman is less rough as well.

But little or nothing can be done about James Tate's set. At first sight it looked striking and exciting, a complicated network of beams and wires supporting an immense ramp spanning the stage and filled in with wire mesh. In a word of

the perfect climb to fame and the inescapable prison of one's nature? I hope it has some meaning to justify it, because in terms of practical theatre it provided a scene handsomely uncompromising, distracting as a constant background to the series of intimate scenes and solos. With only thirteen in the show (playing 30 odd parts) there was no story of people, all that cubic space. The RSC had no more actors, but always managed to give a feeling of movement and of intimacy by using a much smaller space.

There were notable performances by Karin McGuire as the rough but wave-hearted Isaac, and could there be a greater contrast? as the naive Madeline Frank Gallacher also showed great versatility and the other parts (all but emblematic) all came over as distinct characters. All one could ask, I suppose, except a lot more sex and a new script.

As for Jeannie Lewis and her difficult impressionation of the Parisian sparrow, she mastered both the "Petite" and the Cockney, shows why we'll put over the songs with selective vagueness and agency. I never cared for Puf's singing, but was won over by this performance, both musically and dramatically.



Jeannie Lewis as Puf. Photo: Jeff Busby

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THEATRE/WA



NO LIES BUT
DEAN AMERSON

Pinter and Coward

BETRAYAL PRIVATE LIVES

by Colin O'Brien

Directed by Harold Pinter, National Theatre Company, Playhouse, Perth WA (opened September 16, 1985)

Design: Stephen Barry, Design: Steve Paskin
Lighting: Duncan Orr, Stage: Michael George
Towers

Cost: Emma Lethbridge-Jones, Musical Director: Robert Moore (Sydney, better: Steve Cole)
(Professionally)

Performer: Peter Ross (Perth), (for Royal) Perth WA

Opened September 1985, Production: John Marshall, Director: Pidge Marshall, Designer: Bill Dore, Lighting: Andy Collier
Cost: John Marshall, Design: Edward Woodhead, Music: Tim Hinkley, Amanda: Michele Dore, Ward: David L. Taylor
(Professionally)

Harold Pinter's latest play, *Betrayal*, has rocked a mind and penis, so I looked forward to judging for myself, even resisting the temptation to read the text beforehand.

It is certainly not top-drawer Pinter, and the masses are interesting. Pinter's forte has always been the creation of a peculiar sense, not only in his characters, but in the audience (and confusedly himself) due to his apt for the uncertainty of relationships of memory and of language as a means of communication rather than a device of deliberate evasion. Although what people feel about each other is so subtly unclear here as in other plays (but I must add more in retrospect than at the time of watching) the other confusing uncertainties are less in evidence than usual. In short, we know where we are, or rather find out eventually. Don't I suggest *Old Times* with the Pinter drama club? Or

perhaps, more precisely, this is the first to which *Old Times* is the subject.

The central action of the play is a love affair between a married woman and her husband's best friend. The play moves backwards in time from the moment she tells her lover that she has told her husband of their affair, (which incidentally ended two years before), to the beginning of things nine years previously. It is a good play, amply explored, nicely describing the way people deceive each other and at the same time betray their own integrity. The title thus has meaning on a number of levels. This is highlighted in a scene where the lovers assure each other that they have been faithful to one another, other than with their respective spouses, that is, although neither actually says so. The fact that each is aware of the irony of this is the sort of thing which gives the play its depth. We also have those little evasions and deceptions which such relationships entail: the compromising letter misplaced, the covering of their meetings and so on. I can only think that Lady Amanda Pinter and Vivienne Merchant must have sat spellbound!



Alan Cassell/ Josh Taylor: *Private Lives* Betrayal

I was particularly impressed with Steve Nolan's design for the play; it had the elegant elegance and point necessary for *Pinter*. This is, I think, the first I have seen of Mr Nolan's work and I look forward to more. Stephen Barry's direction was as understated as it should be for such a play, and the three principal actors—Loch Taylor, Alan Cassell and Maurice O'Leary—worked easily together with the full respect *Pinter* demands. Ross Calkins made a good fit of the small part of an Italian waiter, neatly pointing Mediterranean eloquence and insolence.

Animal is a move on *Pinter*'s part toward Coward but offers greater depth; it may not be one for *Animal* *Pinter*, but would a considerable play. Although it is not, I suspect, getting the houses it deserves, it arrives after offerings about the town; it is still one of the more enjoyable productions given at the Playhouse this year.

The Marked Thornton stable (Associated Theatre Producers Assn.) continue their laudable enterprise of combining overseas-trained actors with local talent to provide theatrical commercial theatre, as full houses and a burning hot office for this production of *Private Lives* doubtless testify. Edward Woodward and Michelle Dehne are the lightning leads, backed by local actors Jerry Davis, Vic Hawkins and Faith Clayton. Director Edgar Meeville, designer Bill Dowd and the rest of the company are also totally biased, so there is no call for parochial charges in the mixture.

I have never before seen a production of *Private Lives* (terrible admission for a dramatist) but have read the text and know the excellent recording of some scenes by Noel himself and Gino Laurence. I cannot admit to being a great fan of Coward's plays, although I like his songs and persona, but looked forward to this production of what I believed to be his wisest piece.

The play itself lived up to expectations: lightweight, yes, but a witty, sophisticated upper-class comedy (no-one worth his damn in a Coward play works for a laugh). Edward Woodward's Flynt was a well-timed and neatly pointed performance, though without the elegance and sophisticated ease of the Master himself, but I imagine that the problem with the part is to make it other than surrogate Coward. Michelle Dehne's playing on the other hand seemed to me far too broad, even melodramatic, a degree of overplaying more suited to farce than sophisticated comedy. Vic Hawkins and Jerry Davis performed creditably as what are virtually bald men than food or second banana parts, and Faith Clayton handled the galleys round nicely one-liners in French being hardly the stuff to steal the show.

Edgar Meeville is a confused Coward

fan, and has given us in the past a very creditable Flynt, so I was surprised that his directing did not achieve the cool but back elegance the play seems to demand; it is certainly in part the sheer daunting size of the Royal, but the play seemed broader in tone than necessary. Bill Dowd's set got the period right without being straining, and one or two of the costumes did not help the actors' images. But my disappointment that this production did not offer the degree of polished elegance and sophistication that is the Coward stamp was clearly not shared by the public at large, who flocked along, nor, I should think, by the promoters laughing their way to the bank.

Sartre's hell

NO EXIT

by CHILL GILMAN

It is by Jean-Paul Sartre. The *Hell-to-the-Hell* Play, W. A. G. and September 17, 1980. Director and Designer: Edgar Meeville. Cast: Steven Price, Maurice, Victor, Michael Van Nieuwen, Jane Gilman, Lorraine, Emily Rosemary Ben (Austrian).

As a tribute to the recently deceased Jean-Paul Sartre, The Hell opened its third (and final) season for 1980 with a production of his best known play, *Hell* (1944) and a dramatized "brief life", adapted from his autobiography *Words* (and related biographical material) by Michael van Nieuwen. About this adaptation, called *Man Of His Words*, little needs to be said except that it was brief, and might just possibly have encouraged one or two people in the audience to buy *Words*.

No Exit remains the most revered of Sartre's plays, probably because it is one of the shortest and least words, and because an central conception: the redemption of Hell as psychological moment inherent in the very idea of human reality, was nearly executed. For all this, it's still his words (Sartre was never afraid to let his pen) and despite the remnants of execution, somewhat more.

No acknowledgment is made in the programme for Edgar Meeville's production of the translation used, but I would guess, from the stilted quality of many of the lines and a sprinkling of 50/50 errors that it's a fairly old one. In any case the translation used compounded rather than alleviated one's sense of an excess of the overly-obvious in the writing.

It has been claimed that watching *No Exit* performed can be a "terrifying, intellectual experience". It should be said that there was nothing other terrifying or even very intellectual about this production. As an experience I'd rate about

the middle of the scale from hell to heaven. Given the inherently claustrophobic atmosphere of *The Hell*, it's hard to understand why one wasn't more involved in the play, after proximity to the action of the kind provided there ought to have aided that sense of suffocating enclosedness. Sartre seeks to generate from the action. As it was, I found myself involved in idiosyncratic strenuous efforts to fend off a sense of the suffocating irrelevance of what was going on on stage. I might be wrong, but I don't think it was Sartre's intention to provide his audience with a basic training in angst.

In which case the book stops at the director's desk. I'm certain Edgar Meeville did not set out to bore me. Yet, I'm not



so certain that he used very much for the play, for had he done so the casting may have been a little less Jewish, and the acting a good deal less mechanical. I am a great admirer of the talent of Rosemary Ben, who is a most accomplished performer and has delighted me in many roles in the past. But in the sweet young baby-killing thing *Emile* in this production, she isn't looking anybody, and Meeville should have known better than to let her in the role. To the role of Garçon, Peter Morris brought just the wrong amount of self-consciousness to take the edge off a dispirited performance. Gilman Lomborg did a good deal of standing around with her teeth gritted and her fists clenched, but there were times when one suspected her face of actually feeling something in the circumstances, so small triumph.

In the midst of the evening's proceedings, I did feel a mild stab of terror as my mind wandered to the possibility that when the longest-for-curtain came I'd find that *The Hell* had no exit, and that I was condemned to this Dead By Theatre forever. Now that would have been Hell. As it was, I got out alive and am now in the process of forgetting the whole dismal experience as quickly as possible.

BOOKS



BY JAMES
MCDILLON

On Books and Critics

The Great God Magdalen, and other plays, by Barry Oakley (University of Queensland Press)
The Robyn Archer Songbook (McPhee Gribble)
Bring A Chain Was Fun, The Story of Nicky and Nancy Lee by Nancy Lee (Lusten and Lusten Productions)
Creativity in Dance, by Coralee Hinkley (Alternative Publishing Cooperative)
Gross Intrusion, and other stories, by Steven Berkoff (John Calder)

These remarkable plays — this achievement — this unparalled work — this incisive comment on modern Australian life (I quote from the front flap — the wordism — realism — absurdism — games — naturalism — with overtones) Carthagenian, upper case (I quote from the back flap) — even to roll off cuffs is a selection — verbatim — — bygone witicism — I bring to you gentle reader the Amazing Mr Barry Oakley in something of the style for which we would all like him to become famous

I refer to *The Great God Magdalen* (that pill of a play, to borrow yet another phrase from Mr Graham Bondell *And Other Plays*). This slim volume, as they say, contains six footnotes of bubbles from the champagne intellect of a witty, cultivated, compassionate, quirky, wry, sceptical, coolly intelligent old survivor of the Australian stage (I should point out that these aptitudes are third-hand — coming as they do from Bondell's Introduction, and not directly from Oakley's own "Notand Critic for Lazy Introductions. Making of Footns. Quips, etc" on which that Introduction was based).

The plays are — *Haystackers*, *Where Are You?* (an early play about a crazy old-boy who makes his anti-bureaucratic gesture by locking himself in the only staff toilet), *The Mother, Tomoko*,

a very funny parody of a work by P. Wythe, *Back Private*, an encounter between two old school enemies teaching out their theological and personal differences over a bottle of Scotch and an old Andrews' Notes record, *Biggie Finkert's Desk*, in sort of check-outing for an embowered old public servant, *Scenes*, a masterpiece in the failed academic genre, and *The Great God Magdalen*, a hilarious, apocalyptic, political science-fiction fantasy. The plays are short, the staging simple, and, as the cover says, they are excellent for amateur and college production — although it is to be hoped



that professional theatres will be interested in them as well. And if you haven't got a theatre then a reading lamp will do. Almost.

The characters stagger across the Australian institutional landscape pathetically waving the record of their humanity at every bureaucratic they meet. Best of all is Scenaria, stumbling through a lecture on his second great love, the poet Henry Kendall. He is funny, pathetic and moving, aware of his failure and the triviality of his interest, but clinging like a vanguard knight to his standard. The forlornly-born lyrics of Australia's first romantic Poet Amist he wages a private battle, too, in public, against his principal academic adversary and his hand at his erstwhile mistress and first love, Sylvia. "I gave her up. You forced me out of her garden. Wounded. I creep in again" — pointing to a picture of Kendall. The gesture is one of spiritual triumph in worldly defeat.

Having opened with a paragraph ripped off from Oakley's book, I wish I could

follow with a song from *The Robyn Archer Songbook*. But fearing that we did all wrong "The Where" (a hymn of praise to ideological ascendance) was right, and, as the book suggests, it's a song where everyone should add their own words. We sang.

You Responsible Critics on opening night.

You never have fun, but you know what to write.

You've got "critical standards", but you don't really care.

You can see what is missing, but you can't see what's there.

It's sung to the traditional melody which ends "With a so-so-ll, so-so-ll, so-so-llay" ("If there's anyone there that I can't dream") Archer says, "The only basis of inclusion is that whether the verse is about should have at some time, no matter how perfunctory and grandly or unreasonably and pettily on the author's part, given you the shits."

The book is a collection of songs from *The Ladies' Chorus*, *The Fire-Godd*, *Brusht-Be-Tree-Our-Our*, *Admission of Superstition*, *See You, Captain Lazar* and *Songs From Jack's Arm*. Also as well as some more private material. They range from good old (but-shifting) political songs to gentle but tough love songs. Through them all emerges an extraordinary personality — hard-thinking, warm and strong.

For the nostalgia there is *Bring A Chain Was Fun*, a rambling series of anecdotes and memories by Nancy Lee. The book covers the great days of Australian rugby, with Chatterton, Corry during the '60s and '80s, and up to the '90s when Nicky Lee on HZ drew 79% of the ratings in Melbourne.

Dancers in Dance, by Coralee Hinkley, presents a rich mixture of theories, ideas and suggestions for teaching dance to education as an expressive art form. The book comes out of the author's work in Sydney secondary schools. It shows particularly through examples, how the discipline of modern dance and exploration of new ways of movement can be used in class to tap students' creative resources, and get them earnestly expressing their experiences through Art.

Gross Intrusion and other stories by Steven Berkoff is not my sort of book. If you think you can handle a satirical series of unedited interludes all about the more violent and gory aspects of sexuality then you can probably also cope with the obscenity and aggressively vulgar prose style.

ACT THEATRE

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7600)

Canberra Philharmonic Society, Canberra November 28, 31, 24-29

CANBERRA THEATRE FOYER (49 7600)

Canberra Theatre Centre presents *The Runaways of Tobinco and Swan Song* by Anton Chekhov. Directed: Joyce McFarlane. To November 7

The New Science by Graham Pitt. Director: Warwick Baxter. November 10-21.

PLAYHOUSE (49 6488)

Artistic Theatre Company *The Aspidochelone of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde. Director: Rodney Delaney. To November 3

Freemason by Tom Stoppard. November 16-22, 24-29

REID HOUSE THEATRE WORKSHOP (47 0781)

Women's Theatre Group/L. GRIFFIN *Nervy* The Director: Camille Blandin. Close November 2

Canberra Youth Theatre. *Wavelength* in Walk, devised by the group. Directed: Steve Payne. To November 8. Rook's Gallery

Shoving Beams and Bricks from the Backstage Devised by the group. Opens late November

Ignare Company *Mr Jack, You Are and The 50000* at various locations

Canberra Repertory *Arden and the Love* by Joseph Kneeling. Director: Pam Rosenberg. Nov 19-Dec 30

out November.
Ramada Inn, Crown St. *The Belle River Show* by Tony Harvey and Malcolm Franklin, directed by Peter Meredith. music by Gary Smith. Throughout November

BREAD AND CIRCUS COMMUNITY THEATRE (67 9994)

Wollongong Workers Club Theatre Restaurant

The Down the Mine and Up the Spout Show written by the company, directed by Frank Barnes. Into November

BONDI PAVILION THEATRE (37 3734)

After Spent by Noel Coward, directed by John Gully, with Valerie Newman, Tracey Lee, Edward Lumsden, Hilary Beninger, Marie Lloyd, John Wiggins and Cheryl Noonan. Until November 9

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (39 9577)

Golden Parakee Through *Aspen* by Rodney Morgan, directed by Brian Comp, with Roger Carroll, Rana Edwards, Lucy Perna, Enak Haines, Hal Jones, John Luffan and Alex Pender. Throughout November

FRANK STRAINS BULL N BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (37 4637)

Phoebe with Director, George Camden with Noel Brogan, Barbara Wenden, Grah Meade, Neil Hynes and Heidi Lofran. Throughout November

GENESIAN THEATRE (55 5448)

Arden and On Long by Joseph Kneeling, directed by Paula Bass with May, Patsy Ruth Scott, Steven Lofran, Dennis Allen and Terence Benson. Commences November 1

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (31 3411)

The Best Little Whore House in Town by Larry King and Peter Masterson, directed by Larry Vador, with Lorraine Buhl, Alfred Anderson and Mona Richardson. Throughout November

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (26 2201)

To-Be Show by John McCulloch and Peter Waddell. To Nov 13

THE KING OF QUALITY THEATRE COMPANY (33 933)

The Struggle Through

The War Movie by John Upton, directed by Steven Wallace with Willie Connell, Mervyn Danks, Robert Hughes, John Harrison and Victoria Burton. Until November 2

The Seeds of Frost, Screen by Dennis Williams, directed by Les Manning. Commences November 6

KIRRIHILL PUP THEATRE (32 1405)

Kirrihill Hotel, Murrumbidgee
The Robin Hood Show by Perry Quinion and Paul Clark, directed by Perry Quinion, with Lorraine Smith, Michael Fitzgibbon and Ross Hobson. Throughout November

LES CERRIE PRESENTATIONS (38 9676)

Calves, Devised and performed by Colin Douglas and Tom Sator for infants.

primary and secondary NSW country throughout November

Major Roland Brown, multi-instrumentalist (sax, oboe, clarinet, piano) and secondary North Coast, Hume and metropolitan areas until November 21

LIVING ESTATE LUNCHEON THEATRE (37 1206)

Musical by Pauline Macfarlane, directed by Felicity Gordon, with Robert Collingwood and Ben Wright. Until November 7

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (48 7144)

Ami Me Ami by Cate Porter, directed by Alister Donagh, with Eliza Stevens, Patsy Hynesway and Kerrie Johnson. Commences November 7

MUSIC 101 THEATRE (37 7635)

At the Loft with The Tappan Family and James Desmond. Throughout November

N.W. THEATRE (31 3403)

Willy Rough by Bill Baynton, directed by Jon Williams, with Elwyn Edwards, Christopher Howell, Brian Conan, Jan Rutherford, Mark Williamson, Chris Badger, Monica Walker and Michelle Pashard. Until November 9

A Topical Soapbox Series by Foxconn Kirby and Peter Morgan, directed by Les Taylor, musical direction by John Short. Commence November 15

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DRAMATIC ART (66 7815)

NIDA Theatre

Turkey by John Galsworthy, directed by George Ogilvie, with three young students. Until November 9

SHIMROD THEATRE (66 9500)

Uptown by John Bell and Neil Aspinwall, with Paul Harrison, Paul Chubb, Peter Collingwood, Rod Conn, Taylor Copper, Linda Copper, Tim Hunt, Colin Fooks, Pat McDonald and John McTear. Until November 7

Democracy 4 by Jacki Day by Tom Sheldon and Tony Taylor, with Tony Sheldon, Tony Taylor, David Robinson and Robyn Murre. Commences November 5

Law Night Show Stop Arrive Speech with Ward Johnson, Kelvin and Curtis. Throughout November

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF (37 1206)

The "Mild" Answer for persons schools and The University of Sydney, Japer Tansley for secondary schools, both directed by Ian Watson with Anna Callahan. Thrued London, Colin Allen, Brian Jones and Romaine Leane. Metropolitan area throughout November

PARIS THEATRE (36 7070)

Sak (the title by Henry Arthur) directed by Rodian Fisher, with Nancy Harris and Maggie Kirkpatrick. Throughout November

Q THEATRE (347 362594)

Wings and *Is*, Harold Hecht and Kurt Wolf. At Perth until November 15

THE NEW AUSTRALIAN THEATRE

NSW THEATRE

ARTS/EDUCATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES (33 6611)

School Tours *For* throughout regional Australia for infants and primary metropolitan area until November 14

ARTS THEATRE PRODUCTIONS (66 9323)

Cosm House Hotel, Taylor Square
Four in the Mirror Show by Tony Harvey, Peter Meredith, Malcolm Franklin, directed by Malcolm Franklin, music by Gary Smith with Tony Harvey. Through-

Orange, November 25-28
RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY
(060) 252020

Contact theatre for details

THE ROCKS PLAYERS (060) 62003

*The Musicians or The Dream of Joseph
Shed* by Barry Hayes, directed by Barry
Hayes. Commences late November
SEYMOUR CENTRE (062) 50533

Dancers *The Two Graces* of
Fresco and *Musette for Musette*
presented by A Shakespeare Company
with Ruth Cusack, Rex Craughon,
Arthur Dignan, Drew Forsythe, John
Gaden, Ron Haddock, Jennifer Hogan,
John Howard, Robert James, Kerry
Walker and Jim Waters in repertoire from
November 7 to November 28

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR

YOUNG PEOPLE (08) 2948

Shopfront Company touring city schools
with *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare
and *Children and The Tale Pin* created
by the cast and directed by Errol Bray
Tooth Theatre Showcase *Went's Looking
at You* Screenplay by Brett Danaher
November 1, 7 and 8

Dance Dramas by FIDA November
16, 15 and 21 and 22

Dances by Parigides, directed by Fred
Ray November 28 and 29

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
(02) 581

Drama Theatre, SOH

The Princess Women by Lark Nevra,
directed by Richard Wherrell, with Robyn
Nevra and Nom Harkness. Commences
November 11

THEATRE ROYAL (02) 6111

There's Nothing Our Song by Neil Simon
directed by Phil Cusack, with Jackie
Waters and John Waters. Throughout
November

DANCE

ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER

DANCE THEATRE (02) 5811

Recording Hall SOH

Heritage November 26-30

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

(03) 126

Regent Theatre

Anna Karenina choreographed by Andre
Prokoryev, with Valentina Kozlova. Until
November 3

Cinderella choreographed by Frederick
Ashton. November 7-22. Opera Theatre
The Three Musketeers choreographed by
Andre Prokoryev to music by Verdi.
Commences November 28

OLD

THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (062) 344

Shock by Brian Clemens, director.

Imperial Debutante To Nov 15

Treasure Island by Bernard Miles and Hal
Schaffer, director, Jay McKee. From Nov
20

Childrens Theatre: *Little Black Sambo* by
Eugene Hickey. To Nov 15

LA BOUTE THEATRE (06) 622

A Mandel Of Friends by David William-
son, director, Jennifer Blackledge. To Nov
15

Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book
For Boys by Rob George, director.
Macdonald Haylock. From Nov 21

QUEENSLAND THEATRE

COMPANY (02) 3177

SGD: *Crushed In Desire* by Michael
Boddy, director, John Myles, designer.
Graeme Maclean. From Nov 21

For names contact Don Sutcliffe on
(06) 611

SA

THEATRE

ADELAIDE THEATRE GROUP

Shedda Theatre. *Macbeth* Nov. Night

Dances by William Shakespeare, director.

Donna Leonard. Nov 25-Dec 20

ARTS THEATRE (02) 5777

Angus Stone. *The Americans* by Bill
McLennan. director. Rob Robinson.
Nov 1-8

BASMENT THEATRE BAND

The Warehouse, Rundle St. *East Town*
Surreal Of The Future by the Ensemble.
To Nov 10

Q THEATRE (02) 5631

89 Halifax St. *Rei. Four* by Noel Coward,
director, Bill O'Day. To Nov 29

SPACE THEATRE (01021)

Festival Centre. *The Paper Bag Theatre*
Company presents *Manuel And Gervil*
Nov 4-8

Little Patch Theatre. *Everything Under
The Sun* Nov 11-15. *Trunk TIE Team*
Arm Of Dynamite. Nov 18-22

STAGE COMPANY

Theatre 62. *Chorus Another* by Ron
Blair. director. Brian Dehaan, with John
Noble. Nov 18-22

Space Theatre, Festival Centre. *Folly's
Folly* by Langford Wilson. director, John
Noble, designer, Brian McKendree. Nov
28-Dec 6

STATE THEATRE COMPANY
(01) 5151

The Playhouse: A Month In The Country
by Ivan Turgenev, director, Nick Knight,
designer, Sue Russell. To Nov 22

The Ship's Whistle by Barry Oakley,
director, Kevin Palmer, set designer, Sue
Russell, costume designer, Richard
Roberts. Nov 28-Dec 15

Magpie TIE Team. *Accident Town*
Until Feb. *To Love Me and French*
Alison. *The Bell*. Various Metropolitan
schools. To Nov 30

THEATRE GUILD (02) 3433

Acting Company. *Sir Galahad And The
Green Knight*. Unley Town Hall Theatre
and schools near. Nov 24-Dec 19

TROUPE (010764)

At The Red Shed. *Judgements* by Barry
Collins, director, Peter Dunn. Nov 4-22

OPERA

FESTIVAL THEATRE (01021)

The Australian Opera. *Boris Godunov*,
conductor, Peter Seymour, producer.
Elph. Mackintosh, designer, John Bury,
Music, Libretto. *Massachusetts*. Nov 26, 22,
25, 28

Pennance by Gilbert And Sullivan,
conductor, Geoffrey Arnold, producer.
John Cox. designer, John Stoddart. Nov
21, 26, 27, 29

Lucia De Lammermoor by Donizetti,
conductor. Richard Bortyng, producer,
John Copley, designer. Michael Stroud
and Henry Bardon. with Jean Sutherland.
Nov 19, 22, 26, 29

STATE OPERA (02) 3788

The Opera Theatre. *Eugene Onegin* by
Tchaikovsky, director and designer, Tom
Langwood, conductor, Myer Friedman.
Nov 1, 4, 6, 8

For names contact Edith Roff on
223816

TAS

THEATRE

POLYGON THEATRE COMPANY
(040818)

Theatre Royal Hobart. *Sole & Sole* by
Sondheim, director, Don Gay, with
Pamela Ashcroft, Don Gay, Norman La
Motte, and John Phelps. Nov 6-8

SALAMANCA THEATRE COMPANY
(03) 3299

Youngs Schools. *I've Got A Name* by
John Lane, director, Richard Derry.
Taking *Savage* by Mark Bromelow,
director, Peter Townsend. Performances
in Barnes and Hobart

dance work. Artistic Director, Ron Baker. Performed by Ron Baker, Lucyna Sawatko, Victoria Swann, Robert McNamara, Peter Howley and company. Nov. 23-26.

MAJOR AMATEUR THEATRES
Baton Theatre Group (762 0882)
Clayton Theatre Group (858 1702)
Hendelberg Rep. (48 2262)
Malvern Theatre Co. (211 0028)
Penguin Theatre (828 9375)

For entries, contact *Creative Australia* on 267 5848.

WA THEATRE

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (321 6288)

Beyond A Joke by Derek Benfield
Directed by Vivian Hall, with Arthur Lowe, Margaret Earl, James Reams. Opens November 8.

HOLE IN THE WALL (381 2485)

How by Martin Sherman. Directed by Edgar Maccabe. Opens November 8.
Penelope by Jack Hilder. Directed by Peter Morris. From November 12.

PLAYHOUSE

The Same Square of Dust by Mary Culp. Early life of Charles Kingsford Smith. Directed by Stephen Barry with Paul Mason, Alan Connell. Opens November 8.

Oliver by Lionel Bart. Directed by Stephen Barry. From November 20.

REGAL THEATRE (381 6288)

Mothers and Fathers by Joe Mangan. Directed by Bernie Barlow with George Lantry. From October 30. By Australian Theatre Productions.

WA ARTS COUNCIL TOURING PROGRAMME

Theatre-in-Education Team. Tour of Eastern Goldfields' Primary Schools with some programmes as listed above. *For Whom... St George and the Dragon* and *Ron Lager*. November 3 to 14.
Photographic Tour. Rothman's National Photographic Press Awards — tour of North West of Western Australia.

OPERA

HIS MAJESTY'S (321 6288)

The Consul by Menotti. Directed by Grol Gibbs. October 13 to 22.

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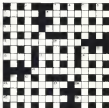
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THESPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 27.

Name

Address

Across:

1. Another keeps an instrument for nothing (3)
2. A widowed doe is cruel, it's said (4)
3. Judge of classic beauty (3)
4. See a French play then have dinner gradually (9)
5. Place a sugar on one on form, even though he has no responsibility (11)
6. Pass in the carnival, be magnificent (4)
7. Many leave secret open (3)
8. Elected Scotsman (4)
9. Named various items like lions and tigers (11)
10. Dicks out a 9 in the music school (9)
11. Verbose victory as Dec Why (3)
12. Glutton's tendency results in bad tantrums (9)
13. Lawrence, in a fight, is wet (3)

Down:

1. Saladin can perhaps indicate site of Wellington's victory (9)
2. Desperate point to turn over and showed the way
3. He's lalalalout some say, yet I fear him (4)
4. In a tree, prove this fruitful sage (11)
5. See the many side on the quiet during the decline (3)
6. End of Irishman in the oriental league (3)
7. Well-known man raising a take-away service (11)
8. "What" will these hands be to be —" (Macbeth) (3)
9. Shock about orange manners men's evaluation (9)
10. What a villain to quote dual thee (9)
11. Divide some land to make Hal very cross (3)
12. Wind off a blow from the composer (3)
13. Throw out a sofa for the lawn (4)

